



THE SPECTATOR.

Some Married Fellows is a novel which, to certain readers of the kind that any competent writer likes to have, will prove more fascinating than any other upon our list. It is a novel of University life, but the noisy undergraduate element, generally so conspicuous in works of fiction which can be thus described, is, after the first chapter, nowhere to be found; and though the mere story has a fine quality of narrative interest, the attraction of the book resides neither in its firmly laid-in background, nor in its sequence of incident, but in its delicately truthful delineation of character,—notably, of two contrasted masculine types. It is difficult to give on canvas the effect of clear, bright, unbroken sunshine; and it seems equally difficult to realise in literature the effect of perfect moral and mental healthfulness, though Thackeray once overcame the difficulty wonderfully in the portrait of one of his minor characters,—J. J. Bidley, in *The Newcomes*. The author of *Some Married Fellows* has hardly achieved such an entire success; but though Chevington Applewood is not outlined so distinctly as he might have been, there is quite sufficient distinctness to enable us to realise the true nature of his charm,—the charm of that fine selflessness which is preserved from lapsing into flaccid amiability by those robust qualities of mind and conscience that in the mass constitute what we call strength of character. It must, however, be admitted that the morbid, warped Randal Kelbridge is much more of an obvious success, because the angles of his nature, which give to it an arresting individuality, lend themselves with such readiness to effective portraiture. In some respects—though the two men are very different—Kelbridge reminds us of *Langham* in

W. S. Bell

lovableness, the same overlying crust of a morbidity which is really selfish, though it assumes sometimes, at any rate to the man himself, the appearance of unselfishness. Thus, Keltridge makes Helen most acutely wretched by the very action which he would himself defend as having been resolved upon solely with a view to her happiness; and, indeed, much of the cleverness of the story—though cleverness is a word which we hardly like to use in connection with a book which is so much better than any book can be which is simply clever—is seen in the way in which the author gets her effects by reflex rather than direct portraiture. We are made to understand the personalities of Applewood and Keltridge by being shown how other personalities—notably those of the women with whom they are most intimately associated—were affected by them. We know the former mainly through Margaret, the latter mainly through Helen. When once the advantages of this method are pointed out, they seem obvious; but it is a method that is by no means frequently adopted, and very seldom indeed with the measure of success attained in *Some Married Fellows*. There is such equality of excellence in the book, both as regards substance and form, that it does not occur to one to single out this or that passage as specially happy; but of course there are situations richer than others in that intrinsic interest which is independent of mere executive charm. Such are many of those which mark the course of the tragic comedy of which Keltridge and Helen are the hero and heroine,—such, notably, is the chance interview between Helen and Dr. Garfoyle, which is hardly unworthy of a place beside the momentous meeting of Romola and Savonarola. Of course, we know the force of such a comparison; but for a book like this, the faint praise of conventional compliment is inadequate.

Copied-

The Athenaeum. May 20. 1893.

Some Married Fellows.

"This is a very clever book. - The conscientious reader cannot fail to appreciate the brilliancy of the conversation, which in many places may be described as a fire of epigrams.

It is unusually well written.

It shows a good grasp of several phases of character, an intimate knowledge of the life depicted: a general knowledge of the world, & that sort of easy acquaintance with facts, & ideas of various sorts which goes by the name of Culture."

Some Married Fellows.

By the Author of "The Dailys of Sodden Fen,"

"Four Crotchets to a Bar," etc.



In Two Volumes.

Vol. I.

London:

Richard Bentley & Son,

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1893.

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THE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE'S NEW BUILDINGS.

In a novel of University life written many years ago by the wife of one of the leading dons at Cambridge there occurs the following prophetic passage: "By that time," said the Professor, "I shall expect that a 'Board of Agricultural Science' will have been inaugurated and I shall be prepared to transfer my valuable attention to patent manures and high farming." Shocking as it may seem to the old school of University men, the Board of Agricultural Studies has long been an established fact, and this week the University School of Agriculture has opened buildings of which it may be justly proud.

see
p. 40.

May 1910.

THE WORLD.

There is little to be said in the way of criticism about a novel with the unattractive title *Some Married Fellows* (Bentley), because it is one to be contemplated, but not analysed, one to be familiarly described as out-of-the-way. There are readers to whom the life and death of Chevington Applewood and Margaret, and the mutual mistakes of the other Fellow and his wife, will not say anything; there are readers to whom these matters will be eloquent. The former will find the novel dull, the latter will regard it as something more and better than a novel.

Those who have read the *Daily's* of *Sodden Fen* will remember with pleasure the skill with which the air and character of the Fen Country and its inhabitants were portrayed. *Some Married Fellows* exhibits similar power in the graphic delineation of a Cambridge College; and it is not spoiled by any of those curious blunders which are often found in novels of University life. And while the sketches of places and scenes are good, the *dramatis personae* are not mere caricatures of living or well-known originals. As a study of the misery caused by that morbid self-consciousness, which is supposed to flourish in an academic atmosphere, the book has a melancholy interest: its chief defect lies in the insufficient motive for the conduct of the heroine, and the insufficient grounds for the final reconciliation. But the different characters are carefully drawn and skilfully grouped, and the book is well worth reading, even by those who are not attracted by its local interest.

S. P. Venn


Jan²⁴ 1893.

IN MEMORY OF MARGARET.

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SOME MARRIED FELLOWS.



CHAPTER I.

MIDNIGHT had just chimed from the bells of St. Mary's Church, in the market-place of Cambridge. The streets were deserted, save by a few stray passers ; here and there a cook's boy, or a gyp, hastening homewards to his quarters in Barnwell or Sturton Town. But from a set of rooms in the first court, beyond the closed gateway, of a college hard by, the sounds of uproarious mirth announced that a bump supper was well forward, and was about to be concluded by the singing of

three comic songs at once, each with a popular and deafening chorus ; for the time of year was May—May, before the boat races had been pushed on into June—and the college second boat had made its bump at Ditton Corner, and was celebrating the event discordantly.

The rest of the college was by this time enveloped in a silence which emphasized the mad mirth of the revellers. Earlier in the evening there had been many guests coming and going from the men's rooms ; a concert in the hall had filled the courts with girls, lightly appalled in evening dress, with chaperones enveloped in many-coloured wraps. Lights shining through the windows had illuminated the bright rows of flowers in pots, with which those who had friends up adorned their window-ledges at the festive season ; but now the company had departed, the gates were closed, the combination-room and hall were forsaken, and

most of the seniors had betaken themselves to their beds, with the early disposition of men supposed to lecture at nine o'clock in the morning ; and the festive undergraduates were left to their final expenditure of excitement unobserved, save by the wearied and impatient gyps.

The rooms in which the supper had been held were a shabby set in the basement—long, low, and wainscoted with defaced, black oak—in the most ancient part of the college buildings. The outer doorway was at the moment encumbered with baskets of relinquished plates, dishes, remnants of food, after the objectionable custom of college servants ; and upon the wall at the upper part of the doorway, in white letters upon a square black ground, might be read the name of the man in whose rooms the feast was going forward, together with those of “Mr. Keltridge” and “Mr. Applewood,” who occupied the two sets above—the prefix

proclaiming the fact that these were not undergraduates, but resident Fellows of the college. There was a lecture-room opposite, where the said gentlemen were in the habit of requesting their pupils to meet them at given hours; but at present it was devoted to the storage of superfluous articles of furniture, discarded caps and gowns, and empty bottles. An ancient wooden staircase, steep and corkscrewed, ascended from the passage, first to Mr. Keltridge's outer doorway, thence to Mr. Applewood's; and subsequently, if you braved the dust and cobwebs, you arrived at a disused set, too antiquated for present comfort, relegated to the service of bed-makers, and full of baths, pamphlets, and portmanteaux.

Now, as the noise acquired resonance and volume, drowning the familiar chimes in the market-place, Mr. Applewood's door opened, and that gentleman deliberately

descended the stairs, with a benevolent aspect of tolerant remonstrance visible on his open countenance. Now, Chevington Applewood was, without exception, the most popular man in the college, or he might have hesitated before intruding the presence of a senior and a "don," upon such an occasion as a bump supper. But he was the favourite presiding genius of every "smoking concert," the hero of every man who ever wore the uniform of the boat; for, in spite of what might have been regarded as the unpropitious training of five years, spent as a midshipman in the royal navy, he had, upon leaving the service and coming up to college, distinguished himself both in athletics and on the river. From his college boat he had passed to a place in the "University eight," being the only man of his college for years who had so distinguished himself. Having subsequently coached the college boat for

years, he became, in fact, the hero whom all these vociferous lads looked up to and admired. His previous reputation filled them with emulation and respect ; and his splendid physique contributed not a little to maintain his supremacy. He placed his broad back against the open doorway and stood silently fronting the heated assembly, smiling at the lull which had suddenly marked his appearance upon the scene of the uproar. The old-fashioned doorway was barely six feet by three, and scarcely cleared his head. He leant against it in a characteristic attitude, displaying to advantage the striking peculiarities of his fine features, the broad, square forehead, upon which stiff masses of strong dark hair lay in rings indicative of vitality ; the straight, finely chiselled nose, the firmly outlined mouth, the dark, penetrating eyes, with their searching yet smiling glance, which invited confidence and repelled none, even when

rejecting their opinions. But the most distinguishing feature of the man lay in the victorious balance of the head ; a sort of triumphant throw-back, eloquent of conscious power, and of perfect nervous equilibrium. The whole announced a generous nature, fed by some secret wealth of joy, and ever inviting the approach of its fellows. Now, as his eyes rested in kindly sympathy upon the young fellows before him, the mirthful crew shouted to him for “a speech ;” whereon he delivered a short valedictory address upon their success in the races, and appended thereto a hint—permitted by the polite envelope of congratulation and apology in which it was presented—that it might be well to limit their libations and self-laudations within bounds assigned by the customs of society and the laws of the University. They took all that he said in good part, and the discordant triple chorus fell into measured

rhythm to the tune of "For he's a jolly good fellow," as he retraced his steps to the dark garret which served as a bedroom in this part of the college.

The renewed hubbub roused Randal Keltridge from an uneasy doze, into which he had fallen, over his solitary fire above, during the pause occasioned by Applewood's speech; and, with a growl of fresh disgust at the revived annoyance, he staggered across the floor to attend to his lamp. It was smoking horribly, and if not speedily refilled, would shortly leave him to the midnight blackness of the dull room. Neither Applewood nor Keltridge had long come into their Fellowships. Promotion was becoming slow. They held them upon the modern short-tenure system, independently of any question of marriage, and they had to put up with rooms in the oldest part of the college, rejected by their seniors. But whilst Applewood's sitting-room was full of

chairs, cushions, and screens, embroidered by his sisters' hands with the college arms, and was rendered interesting by the display of trophies of his nautical and athletic triumphs; in Keltridge's a duster, which the bed-maker had disdained to remove, was the only rag which spoke of feminine consideration. In place of the oars conspicuously affixed to the wall above Applewood's mantelshelf, a pair of crutches stood by Keltridge's fireplace. For the man was lame; one leg being so decidedly shorter than the other, as to be rendered serviceable only by a cork boot; and even with that he was frequently reduced to fall back upon the aid of crutches. If Chevington Applewood was the most popular man in the college, Randal Keltridge might, probably, with equal consent of Fellows or of undergraduates, have been described as the least so. Beside the generous man with sympathies ready to accept all comers until they

proved themselves absolutely unworthy, lived this lonely and impossible being, with his heart closed, reticent, morbid, avoiding society, afraid to be unreserved even with his daily companions; secretly astonished at the possibility of such unreserve in another, criticizing it, contemptuous of it even, at bottom; full of thought, but sharing his thoughts with no man; incredulous of sympathetic ties with individuals; esteeming opinions as the only cement between man and man; solitary in society; indignant, in the depths of his melancholy soul, because he was not made like his more popular companions, who yet appeared to him to be so superficially endowed with the power to conquer men and women's hearts by the fatal facility of speech. On the college matriculation book, the entries referring to the admission of these two men to the college, were dated eight and ten years back, and read as follows:—

“Applewood, Chevington. Admitted October 3, 1866. Age 18. Son of George Grosvenor Applewood, Esq., of Chichester, J.P. for Sussex. Born and baptized there. Late a Midshipman, R.N. Left the service on his father’s death.”

“Keltridge, Randal. Admitted July 10, 1864. Age 19. Born in London. Son of John Keltridge, Esq., solicitor, of Finsbury Square. Educated at Finsbury College.”

To this meagre information might be added the record of their subsequent academic career, as supplied by the pages of the University calendar, from which it appeared that Randal Keltridge had taken his place as ninth wrangler in the mathematical tripos, and that Chevington Applewood, amongst the “senior optimes,” had distinguished himself in classics, by securing a first class.

The noise made by the rollicking men below was a keen annoyance to Randal Keltridge; for, being personally disqualified

from his youth upwards for sharing in any sports whatever, his natural loathing of them was but the outcome of bitter early yearning. He had endured the noise all the evening with ever-growing impatience. As he stood refilling his lamp the light shone upon his thin, sallow countenance and lean, fragile person. The hands which held the oil-can were attenuated, and no larger than a woman's. With all its delicacy, there was nothing soft about the features of the dark, keen face; it was even sternly moulded. But the mouth spoilt, or possibly explained, the whole face; it was a contradiction, a flaw. Until you looked at it, you thought you understood the man; you were prepared to class him as hard, dry, argumentative, dogmatic, cold, unpoetic. You might take your choice of any of these terms, and be sure that every outsider was in the habit of applying them freely to him, behind his back. But these were persons whose

judgments ran, and stumbled ; the careful observer would demur at the mouth. It was such a pitiful thing—large, and loose-lipped, a blemish to the whole countenance. He should have worn a beard ; he should have covered it by a moustache ; but no one had ever been intimate enough with Randal Keltridge to tell him so. What did the mouth mean ? Was he an epicure ? Not he. No complaint of the cook's menu ever won his support ; and a single bottle of sherry was all that might be found in his sideboard. Were the lips soft, then ? Not so. No mother or sister had ever kissed them ; nor, it may as well be said at once, had any other woman. His mother died at his birth, and his father—who was his sole representative of a family—had succumbed, quite recently, to a final attack of paralysis ; consequently, the man found himself alone, and possessed of ample means to make life agreeable to himself, could he only discover

the way of doing it. When he went to sleep just now, Keltridge had supposed himself to be in a fair way to make the discovery. As he stood chafing at the crackling explosions of mirth from below, and fuming at the stifling smell of the lamp, he had congratulated himself on the step he had determined to take. For three years running he had escorted a young lady, a distant cousin of his own, to the races ; and, having a scarcity of relations, he valued the tie as a recommendation. Olive Fayle was twenty-five ; he was nearly thirty. Her manners were pleasant to him. She saved him the trouble of expressing his thoughts by making talk for him. She read modern books which provoked discussion, and asked his opinion of them ; and, after grumbling at her coming the first year, and inviting Chevington Applewood to save him the trouble of entertaining her and her parents on the second occasion, on the third he

had been distinctly pleased at her re-appearance ; and on the fourth and present occasion—his father having died in the interval and left him his property—he had determined that he would ask her to be his wife. He had become aware that, whilst the life of a bachelor Fellow, in college rooms, provides plenty of sharp sauce for the intellect, and plenty of friction for the wits, it is deficient in appeals to the emotions, save in such irritants as undergraduate idiosyncracies seldom fail to provide for the susceptibilities of older men.

Randal Keltridge was not in love with Olive Fayle, and he knew it. This was a matter which caused him secret uneasiness ; but then he was not, and never had been, in love with any one else ; and he had come to the conclusion, after much wearisome consideration of the question, that it was a mistake to suppose that the man must neces-

sarily take the initiative in this matter; he had decided that his nature required some one to be in love with him first. No one had ever yet cared for him; even his father had merely done his duty by him, in a distant and indifferent manner, paying his expenses handsomely, but disliking to see him limping about. No mother had been there to sow the seed of love in his heart, consequently there was now no crop to garner; but with a wife he might yet hope that the future would repair the failures of the past; and a wife he had made up his mind he would have. Yet he knew that he was perfectly contented to do without his cousin during the long intervals of her absence, and his decision in regard to her could not effectually silence the demon of personal criticism, which incessantly assailed him in lonely hours. This night the trouble had taken the form of a dream, as he dozed over the fire; wherein, with the words of his offer on his lips, he

had incessantly followed Olive Fayle from college garden to college court, from the kitchen and the combination-room, to Fenner's or the river, always to find some one else between them. Go where they might, they were never alone, and yet he himself was the sole offender.

The girl's looks beckoned him on, her smiles said all it was permitted them to say : but, go where they might, and he followed her far from the precincts of the old University town, still they were never alone. And the third figure that was between them everywhere, in boats, in cabs, in trains, in buildings, by the seashore, in solitary as in crowded places, was no other than his own image ! He himself, or his own double, murdered his own attempts at courtship, and forbade his own banns ! He caught himself at last on the steps of the altar, as his cork boot thrust itself out to divide bride and groom ! It was a nasty nightmare ; the worse that, on

awakening from it, Keltridge understood its origin only too well. The shadow of his own hidden consciousness that he did not, could not, love the girl, had taken shape, thus in sleep, to divide them; aided no doubt by the circumstance that he had been expecting her to come up for the last three days, and that she had not appeared. Not a line, not a word, had he received; here was the last night of the races, and he was still left in uncertainty as to the reason of her non-appearance, with her parents, as expected and agreed upon.

Thinking of her so constantly, it seemed to Randal Keltridge as though he saw Olive Fayle's name everywhere, not only in sleep but in waking moments; even in the first column of this three days' old *Times*, imported from the combination-room table upon which he had placed his lamp for refilling. How absurd! And yet surely it was there! "Olive—Olive Fayle," too. It was not a

common name! He read with incredulity, for he had scarcely as yet awaked from the intense reality of the dream. That narrow drama, wherein there was no escape from the grip of a desperate situation, still held him; and as yet he possessed no power of self-liberation. He read and re-read, unable to believe what he saw. That notice was meant to inform the reader that one Olive Fayle had been dead some days. Could there be a second girl of the same name? No, that way there was no deliverance, for the address and parentage were inserted also. Then it must be true, this unexpected thing; and they had not even let him know that she was ill. Why should they? He was in point of fact only a distant relation; having as yet committed himself to no positive declaration. With a keen, strange heightening of the imaginative faculty, he limped to the window of his room, overlooking the court. At that instant prolonged

yells rose from the company assembled beneath ; and the moon, issuing from behind a bank of clouds, showed him the festive undergraduates, crawling on all fours at a game of nocturnal leap-frog on the narrow lawn below. They had donned white garments, either night-shirts or surplices, over their ordinary clothing ; presumably to comfort any observant tutor who might be secretly sighing : “ Will they never get to bed ? ” with a visible pledge that they were on their way to their lairs. Presently the moon disappeared again, the court was left in darkness, the howls died away ; and the lonely man remained crouched upon his window-seat, a prey to ghastly associations of ideas. If only his imagination would not have shown him those dissolving views ! That funeral, at which he saw himself assisting in place of the wedding that he had intended ! It was tragic, that fading out of the vision of his life, which suddenly assumed

epic proportions, in place of the very prosaic dimensions of a house on the Trumpington Road. That replacing of white satin garments by the livery of death was ghastly, and he groaned aloud. And yet the groan was for himself ; not for the loss of that fair woman. It was for rage, self-loathing, and despair that he groaned ; for, let his imagination be never so active, his heart remained untouched. Still he could not sorrow for her in death, whom he had never loved in life ; and he knew it ; and his sense of the fact that it was so, that he had arrived at the age of thirty years without having found in himself the power of really caring for any other human being, was unendurable and maddening to him. Unable to read, unable to sleep, unable to escape from his morbid misery by any friendly association, Keltridge remained where he was until daylight drove him to the security of his inner chamber, from the face of the early bed-maker.

Next day Randal Keltridge sat over his fire, ill and miserable; the following day he attended the funeral, as he had foreseen that he should do.

Olive Fayle's parents might well be excused for having forgotten all about him in their crushing grief at the loss of their only daughter; but, at sight of his stricken countenance, they readily accepted his haggard misery for the sorrow of the bereaved lover. This only added to his self-abasement. On his way back to college he bought a revolver, which he carefully stowed away out of sight. Its possession gave him courage to allow himself a longer probation; he might yet develop into something more ordinary and satisfactory. He was still young enough. And, before long, hope took up the task of consolation. It might have been "partly poor Olive's fault," he reflected, or rather "some deficiency of her nature," which had failed to appeal to his

own. Self-love whispered such hints in his ear before long ; she became "poor Olive" to him, and he remembered that there were other women left in the world, and reflected that, with one of them, he might be more successful in his attempts to escape from the bitter companionship of his own persistent ego.

Therefore the whole of the next year he spent in furtively seeking ; in being always, hiddenly, on the look-out. But if a man wishes to keep a secret at all, he must keep it even from himself. It is the only way to prevent such of his friends as have the gift of insight from robbing his uncovered consciousness. And Randal Keltridge soon made this discovery. He had been seen walking about with Olive Fayle for three Mays running ; he had succumbed to deep depression after her death ; his story was readily discussed by his acquaintances in and out of college ; and, for a time,

considerate observation, and kindly reticences, showed that, though "the last man of whom you would have suspected it," he was held to be the hero of an unhappy romance.





CHAPTER II.

IT so happened that, when the following May came round, Chevington Applewood was particularly anxious to have his sisters up for the Gaieties. He had reasons of his own for the wish, which, although not independent of a laudable interest in his sisters' pleasure, yet gave special intensity to his present desires.

As he was a man accustomed to succeed, it seemed quite natural that Mrs. Gruter should immediately invite his sisters to stay at her house, and share their amusements with her daughter Margaret. Mrs. Gruter was the wife of Thomas Gruter, M.A., Professor of Cryptology; and she

had lived in University society for upwards of five and twenty years. Therefore, if you wanted information at any time about any member of that society, which should be at once reliable and picturesque, you could not do better than apply to her; for her penetration was keen enough to take cognizance of the whole community, and her benevolence was genuine enough to embrace it all. Moreover, her hospitality was unbounded; and yet, many a man had discovered with surprise that, cordial as his reception had been, his rejection was none the less certain if he aspired to any permanent footing in her house. It was rumoured, and apparently with truth, that Chevington Applewood was the one favoured exception. Mrs. Gruter was reported to have said of him, in approbation of his undaunted bearing, that he was "the only man in his college who knew how to hold up his head!" And, in allusion to the nautical training which

differentiated him from others, she was in the habit of calling him "a nice breezy out-of-door sort of man." And when she said these things her daughter Margaret grew silent, and fell to remembering the expression of his eyes the last time that they had mirrored themselves in her own; eyes which, to her thinking, had from long gazing across the expanse of ocean waters, gained something of their mobility, their transparency, and yet of their mystery; eyes which met her own with such a tribute of worshipful admiration as could not fail to betray the depths of feeling which lay beneath.

That Mrs. Gruter was perfectly disinterested in her evident affection for Chevington Applewood might not be doubted, since she was well aware that owing to the embarrassed state of the family affairs Applewood had found himself, at his father's death, reduced to a bare five hundred a year, to be divided with his sisters. For

their sakes he had left the navy, and had placed himself at college so as to be at hand to take care of them; and as their mother was dead, and at the time of their father's decease they were only little girls, they had been taken many years before by their mother's elder sister, to live with her in town. With Miss Stanhope their lives could not well be anything else than dull; but Helen and Ciceley Applewood possessed character enough to determine their own fate wherever they might find themselves placed. It was to their brother's personal influence over Mrs. Gruter that they owed their invitation to Cambridge; for Margaret Gruter, besides being distinguished by rare beauty, possessed—as the only child of rich parents—solid attractions enough to tempt any enterprising man; but this was a consideration, as Mrs. Gruter well knew, entirely outside the range of Applewood's calculations.

By this time Chevington Applewood judged Keltridge to be so far recovered from the loss he had sustained in Olive Fayle's death, that he could venture to ask him for the use of his room for a dining-room, on an evening when he wished to entertain his sisters and friends at dinner, and required his own room above for a drawing-room.

"And of course you will join us, Keltridge," he had said, "and take the bottom of your own table? It will hold twelve, I conclude? There will be the Gruters, and my sisters, a modern married pair, the present dean, and Dr. Garfoyle. You remember him,—Terence Garfoyle, M.B., D.D., Vicar of Barnwell. I want him to balance Professor Gruter and another man."

Keltridge agreed with a secret alacrity, which he was far from displaying. He knew Mrs. Gruter, and rather liked her than not; she had a good house in the town, and she had made him as much at

his ease as it was possible for him to be, when he had dined with her there. Dr. Terence Garfoyle had formerly been dean of the college, and his grotesque yet admirable countenance rendered him a marked man, so that nobody could say they did not know him. Moreover, amongst these girls, as well as amongst any others, he might discover a successor to Olive Fayle ; so Randal Keltridge lent his room without reluctance.

They met in Applewood's room, and Keltridge found that the elder sister, Ciceley, fell to his share. The narrow wooden staircase which wound its way down to the lower floor, rendered it a particularly troublesome feat to convey ladies with long flowing trains down it satisfactorily ; and to Keltridge, with his lameness, it was a nearly impossible task. The girl whom he had in charge, seeing the difficulty, smilingly withdrew her hand from his arm, and, gathering up her light blue skirts, remarked brightly—

"I never can see why, as we ladies are supposed to be capable of getting ourselves safely out of a dining-room, we are not held equally competent to get ourselves in."

"I imagine," answered Keltridge, stiffly, "that the origin of the custom dates back to days when men were incapable after dinner of guiding their own steps, and could only be relied upon before a feast."

Yet even while he answered indifferently, her innocent action jarred upon his sensitiveness. She would not have withdrawn from his arm, he told himself, had he not been lame; he even imagined that her eyes rested, for an appreciable moment, upon his halting gait, and his cork boot felt more obvious and more odious than ever. Yet the girl only wished to be kind to him. As she stood at the top of the dark staircase in her radiant youth, her eyes shone and laughed like her brother's; but, unlike his, they suggested no depths wherein

any cognizance of the sorrows of life might hide beneath their appreciation of its joys. She was a bright and sparkling creature, overflowing with exuberance of energy and vivacity of spirits. Both she and her sister Helen were indeed beautiful girls, but of varying types of beauty. Both were tall, upright, and slender. Their features were regular and sensitive ; their hair dark, but in varying shades. Helen was the darker and the most like her brother ; her complexion was paler, and her expression the most thoughtful.

When they were dressing for this dinner, Margaret Gruter had considerably warned them that Mr. Keltridge was lame, and had further sought to enlist their sympathies on his behalf, by confiding to them that he was "supposed to have been engaged to a cousin of his own," who had "died suddenly the year before ;" and she had added that "the poor man" was said to

have "felt it dreadfully." Ciceley had there-upon inquired if Mr. Keltridge was "a romantic-looking individual;" and Mrs. Gruter had arrested the conversation by the remark that it was "precisely under the most commonplace exteriors that the deepest tragedies lay hidden;" that "the most commonplace-looking men and women led you, when you were initiated into their secret histories, to the most undreamt of revelations—like the plains upon chalk downs, to the edges of the deepest chasms."

"Your brother, now, is too good-looking ever to have a history worth mentioning," she had said, as she looked across the room complacently at the handsome figure, then assisting her husband to put on his great-coat.

"Oh yes, Chevington will always swim round happily in a bowl of clear water," Ciceley had replied, glancing affectionately in the same direction, "like a gold-fish with

the sun shining gloriously on his fins ;” and then the carriage had come and they had driven down to the college. But, in spite of Mrs. Gruter’s caution as to the tragedies, the memory of which may lie concealed beneath unlikely-looking exteriors, and in spite of Margaret’s kindly information, Ciceley’s sympathetic fancy refused to vibrate, when she squeezed herself into the corner of the table by Randal Keltridge’s side.

Glancing up and down the length of the room, she found that the narrow table was arranged thus : Her brother at the top, with Mrs. Gruter on his right hand and her daughter on his left. Next to Margaret Gruter, on Ciceley’s side of the table, came Dr. Terence Garfoyle ; by his side the young wife of a resident tutor and lecturer of the College ; then the present dean, such a boyish-looking young fellow, in spite of his dignified appellation. Randal

Keltridge took the bottom of his own table ; Cicely thus found herself between him and the dean. On the opposite side she was fronted by a man unknown ; then came Professor Gruter, ponderous and heavy, or, as his wife phrased it, borrowing the description from an advertising chemist, "guaranteed to be of recognized specific gravity ;" Helen Applewood then divided the husband and wife.

Having ascertained these facts, Ciceley turned her attention to her companion.

"Was he wishing, longing, yearning, that in her place that other girl were sitting by his side ? That girl who was dead, and who should have been by now his bride ?" She asked herself the question, and then sent her mind to rob him of the knowledge that she sought. In vain ! Absolutely close and closed was the man's nature. She could make nothing of it. Nor was there any light, any gleam, any softening, which she

could attribute to the past influence of any woman's nature upon his. "If this man has ever shared a gentle sentiment with any other human being, my penetration is at fault," she said to herself; and Ciceley Applewood was not accustomed to doubt her own insight into other people's minds. But she gave only a brief moment to her diagnosis of her neighbour's case; for she was in the habit of seeing and hearing further than one pair of eyes and ears commonly undertake to do, and she was anxious to observe and listen all round the table. This was her first visit to Cambridge, and she was keenly interested in all that surrounded her. As a result, she missed the conventionalities with which Keltridge commenced the conversation; and then, to cover the accident, she began talking rapidly herself. In answer to a formal remark of her companion's, as to what had struck her most in University society since she came up, she apologetically

replied, "The deficiencies of education in those whom the undergraduates call 'the dons.' Intellectual development, cultivated society, clever conversation ; such nice things, you know, our imaginations taught us to expect before we came up ; and no doubt it is all here ; but there is something wanting which even my sister and I feel we could sometimes supply. Perhaps you can tell me what it is ?"

The man by her side professed his inability to enlighten her, and requested further information.

"Well, then," she said, smiling, "I will give you an illustration of what I mean. All teachers try illustrations, you know. I was walking round Professor Gruter's garden this afternoon with a very high wrangler ; he did not know the name of a single flower. I passed on to trees ; he was worse in them. When we approached the poultry-yard, he grew desperate, and confessed, with a sigh,

that he was ignorant of the ‘names of those creatures,’ and did not ‘know a duck from a hen, off the table.’”

“He was chaffing you, Miss Applewood ; it was the modesty of genius,” said the dean, on the other side.

“Not at all,” interposed Mrs. Gruter, from her end of the table. “It was all the fault of his Noah’s ark, when he was a child in the nursery. So long as they will leave out all the cocks and hens, and provide ducks which are bigger than the elephants, what can you expect of the poor grown-up children? As those things are all made in Germany, it’s my belief it’s done on purpose to undermine the orthodoxy of the British baby.”

“I have been hoping,” said the tutor’s wife, in a clear penetrating voice, “that as the University already examines little girls and boys all up and down the country, it might shortly undertake the inspection of

the Kindergarten schools also. Until it does so, the early training of our children will never be what it ought to be. We might then expect to have animals, correctly modelled upon anatomical principles, turned out for us by the University workshops. It is, as Mrs. Gruter says, a matter of vital importance. I am sure that the chances of my baby's education, in the present state of things, give me many a wakeful night, as I often tell my husband."

Mrs. Gruter's eyes twinkled with fun ; but it was evident that the higher education which had fallen to the lot of this young woman had not developed her sense of humour, for she spoke with really desperate earnestness.

"I have already," she added, turning to Dr. Garfoyle, "sent to Italy for some candlesticks for the nursery mantelpiece ; you cannot place objects of beauty before their little eyes too soon."

“I shall be quite prepared to occupy the chair of elementary education, madam, in this University, if I am elected,” said Dr. Garfoyle. “The Council of the senate will, no doubt, in the days you hope for, consist largely of mothers, and I consider that I possess special qualifications for the post, being a doctor both of medicine and divinity.”

“By that time,” said Professor Gruter, “I shall expect that a ‘Board of Agricultural Science’ will have been inaugurated, and I shall be prepared to transfer my valuable attention to patent manures and high farming.”

“And it would suit you far better than your present subject,” said his wife, *sotto voce*.

Everybody laughed but the tutor’s wife, who looked aggrieved and puzzled. Then Professor Gruter restored the equilibrium of the company by delivering himself of the following weighty sentences, which were mainly addressed to Dr. Garfoyle, there

being no other man of equal University standing present.

“Since my young days, the commercial spirit has penetrated and rotted the whole University fabric. In my youth, if you sent your son up to college, you knew what you proposed to make of him; a gentleman, at any rate, and an educated one to boot. Whereas, nowadays, the University is little better than a huge shop, for the supply of intellectual commodities — a provision merchant’s, where a man can obtain miscellaneous information in any department in which he chooses to call for it.”

“Say a grocer’s at once, my dear,” interposed his wife. “Your grocer sells you Indian or Chinese tea; the University is quite ready to provide you with Indian or Chinese literature, if you desire it.”

He went on, unheeding the interruption. “But there is no longer any recognized standard of a complete education; the in-

tention which harmonized the whole is gone. A man gets stuffed with fragments of instruction here now ; but he gets nothing worthy the name of a sound education."

"It's all in the interests of progress, Professor Gruter ; if the machine creaks and jars, even if it gets out of order, it is because it has grown so complicated, and so vast, compared to what it was in earlier days," objected the tutor.

"Progress !" shouted the professor. "Say rather the eccentricities of exaggerated individualism. A jerky and irregular advance in intellectualism will never produce a cultivated society, nor an educated man. What you want for 'Progress' is a harmonious and simultaneous effort towards some recognized end, towards some ideal higher than any entertained by any individual, be he artist, poet, mathematician, musician, philanthropist——"

"Or divine," interposed Keltridge, sarcastically.

“Or, very possibly, divine,” corrected Dr. Garfoyle.

“And where is there such a culminating point?” inquired Keltridge, dryly.

But Ciceley was beginning to suffer from the unsympathetic attitude of her neighbour. His mental aspect was that of the opposing counsel, and she turned from him to the happy little dean, who was quite contentedly eating his dinner.

“I am quite free to admit, Miss Applewood,” he said, with a suspicion of self-complacency, “that some of our dons don’t shine in society; but it strikes me that you have only half fulfilled your mission as a reformer if you have nothing but criticism to offer us. We might, at least, be permitted to hear your propositions for our reform.”

“You are laughing at me,” said Ciceley, “and no doubt I deserve it. I fully admit that you are clever enough up here. You

meet to eat your dinners and to sharpen your wits, and there is a clashing of knives—I will not say of swords, for no murder is done—and it is altogether alarming; and yet——”

“And yet Miss Appleton objects to feasts of reason without any flow of soul,” interposed Randal Keltridge, cynically.

“I doubt if any society can be a success,” said the tutor, “where the combining atoms come together fortuitously as they do here; for a common ideal we should require careful selection.”

“Which would reduce us to ‘sets,’” objected Mrs. Gruter.

Neither Chevington Applewood nor Margaret Gruter had hitherto taken any share in the conversation, being entirely absorbed in each other’s society; but now Margaret Gruter, fixing her beautiful eyes upon Dr. Garfoyle’s beaming face, asked—

“Do you not think it is the case that a

man must be something of an artist, a poet, or a dramatist, before he deserves to be called a well-educated man? Is it not necessary to consider what he is, or, at any rate, what he is to become, as well as to ascertain what he knows? Does not society really demand that a man should worship as well as inquire?"

"Well done, Margaret," exclaimed her mother; "I see you remember what I have always taught you, that the proper way for a woman to express opinions in society is to ask questions, as they do in Parliament."

"I hold that Miss Gruter is right," exclaimed Dr. Garfoyle, enthusiastically. "No society can be regarded as a satisfactory embodiment of the highest results of education, unless it be instinct with the spirit of colour, of harmony, of perfection; of all that the old Greeks loved to cultivate. The grace not of form only, nor primarily; but of form only as the expression of a spirit, which,

I own, seems to me to be in danger of being starved out, by the one-sided development of intellect. A highly cultivated society should possess the beauty, the variety, the genius of a rare picture, of a masterpiece."

"Yes, and here society displays only, at best, the symmetry of an architectural design," said Mrs. Gruter.

"And how," inquired Keltridge, sharply, "could you rear a cathedral, for instance, without an architectural design, and a hideous mass of scaffolding?"

"True," said the dean; "but who stops there, who regards a forest of rafters and beams with admiration, save perhaps a company of architects or mechanics? These things are only tolerated as a promise of the completed building, with the glories of its sculpture, the harmonies of its coloured glass; with its paintings, its music; nor is it even yet complete without its masses and its worshippers."

“A big machine, a real complex out and out piece of mechanism, is a grander and more wonderful thing to see, any day, than a cathedral—old women, and clergy included,” muttered the hitherto silent man opposite Ciceley, with some heat. “I come from a big manufacturing town, and was born and bred up among machinery ; you know nothing about it down here. You speak of ‘a mere machine,’ in a tone of contempt ; I tell you I’d sooner hear myself talked of as ‘a mere man’ !”

“Well,” said Mrs. Gruter to Applewood, under cover of a burst of general conversation, “I really am indebted to you for introducing me to ‘a mere man,’ who does not even aspire to being regarded as an animal with a mind.”

“Say ‘a brute with a brain ;’ it sounds better, Mrs. Gruter,” he replied.

The lady bowed her acknowledgment of the amendment, and continued.

“But who frankly confesses that he prefers to be looked upon as ‘a machine’ at once!”

“Oh, he is all right,” said Applewood, with his customary serene optimism; “it’s as good a way for him to talk as any other!”

“It is so very uncomfortable,” said Mrs. Gruter, “to sit at dinner by that sort of man, you know, who is so supremely delighted with his own intellect that he resents it, as a reflection upon his idol, if you allow him to discover that you suspect him of the possession of such a superfluity as a soul.”

“I shouldn’t have thought you would want to allude to their souls at dinner-parties, Mrs. Gruter,” observed Helen, tranquilly.

“Nor do I, my dear; it is they who are so apt to be morbidly anxious to make you understand at once—particularly if you are a woman, you know—that they left their little souls behind them in their mother’s

laps long ago; and that, being so very clever, they have since found their intellects quite competent to console them for the trivial loss!"

"As a matter of fact, I always find them too limited in imagination to conceive, and too poor in experience to comprehend, the grounds of any possible divergence of opinion," said the dean.

"In my judgment," announced Professor Gruter, magisterially, "the man who holds that he can dispense with the possession of an immortal soul, dispenses also with the common characteristics of a gentleman! Such a sentiment cuts at the root of all mutual self-respect."

"Oh yes, it murders their manners," agreed his wife. "They have a decalogue of their own, and they dismiss every one who differs from them as intellectually contemptible."

"Negation is the fashion of the day," said

the dean. "By the admission that you believe in anything, in the ears of these modern people, you condemn your own intellect and announce yourself as a person who has never thought at all."

"I am really sorry to hear you all condescending to the attack of the intellectual prig," said Dr. Garfoyle, moderately. "It doesn't do to take him seriously; that method only flatters his conceit. He gets far too much attention paid him. What he wants is snubbing in society, not preaching at from the pulpit. His faults are the faults of immaturity."

"Prolonged, however, in many cases, far on into middle life," objected Mrs. Gruter.

"Ah, well, whatever the number of their actual years may be," said the doctor, "such men are, in fact, the spoilt children of Dame Nature; she has retarded their maturity by finding them bread to their broth, while the rest of their struggling brothers and sisters

have gone without. But, as she has always too many children, by-and-by they will be whipped and put to bed like the rest of us ; there to learn, in secret, charity, silence, and hope. I do not say there to revert to the faiths of their childhood ; but there to learn to advance to the conception of Hope as another term for Belief ; of Silence as another form of Worship ; and of Charity as the one virtue upon which no modern change can pass."

This was serious, and the conversation ended with "Grace."

When Mrs. Gruter had been betrayed by her natural vivacity into committing herself to statements too crisply satirical, she always felt obliged humbly to solicit her daughter Margaret's pardon, before she could be restored to her own self-respect. Margaret enjoyed her mother's epigrammatic speeches, her sketches of persons and things ; but her own spirit dwelt in a region apart from these

interests, to which, nevertheless, she accorded a tender tolerance which never failed.

Their relative positions often seemed to be reversed ; and Mrs. Gruter used to wonder what share she could spiritually have had in the production of so calm and noble a piece of womanhood. Now, as they left Randal Keltridge's dingy dining-room, and prepared to mount the difficult staircase, Mrs. Gruter passed her arm quietly round her daughter's waist, and Margaret understood, and turned and kissed her. Ciceley and Helen had passed on in front, with the tutor's wife : and Mrs. Gruter, with a mother's partiality, took the opportunity of comparing them with her own daughter. They were certainly bright and attractive enough ; but then they were modern girls ; and her stately Margaret, with her pure, calm beauty, was of quite another order. Hers was such a form as sculptors, in all ages, have delighted to model. Her beauty

was of the type which men of the religious and artistic temperament have ever selected as embodying their highest conception of the divine in womanhood. To look at this daughter of Mary, was to feel yourself in presence of a Madonna, whose soft, tender hands only waited for leave to be extended in benediction. The touch of her hand, as it rested for an instant on her mother's arm, was in itself a caress and a support, so strong and tender was its pressure. Hands such as these could never grasp nor claim; but they might sustain a man's head in his dying agony, or soothe the slumbers of a little child.

This evening Chevington Applewood, although he was the host, had eyes and ears only for Margaret Gruter. He had arranged the party solely in order to enable him to spend three hours in her company. Ordinarily he was fond of talking, and with his sea-tales, his unruffled temper, and his

cheerful optimism, he was a gain in any society; but to-night his very bliss silenced him. Randal Keltridge also grew silent, after dinner; he had not got on well with Miss Applewood, as he knew, and his aching self-love had begun to torment him afresh. He imagined that he saw himself mirrored unfavourably in her laughing eyes, and he grew irritable and suspicious. Miss Applewood had not returned him the impress of any of his own opinions or thoughts, placed in a pleasing light, as "poor Olive" used to do; but of a very decided and positive personality of her own.





CHAPTER III.

THERE was a promenade concert next day in the college grounds. Mrs. Gruter, as the centre of a little company of University ladies, was sitting not far from where the band was playing, beneath the shade of a clump of trees, which at this season of the year protected them rather from the wind than from the sun. Some of them were discoursing of the characteristics of their young lady visitors, of whom there were numbers up for the Gaieties. They were speaking not exactly unkindly, but with an asperity pardonable in over-worked chaperones. And the undergraduates who paraded the fair guests up and down, were many of

them entertaining their companions with corresponding stories of the meanness of the "dons," who fed them on "leavings" in hall ; and with striking descriptions of their excentricities. Each age has its grievances, and not for long is it granted to any individual to exercise the wisdom of a matured lenity, which can look on youth and age at once, and yet be just to both. There was a bride among the little group of ladies, one of a number that had come up in the previous October term, when all the Fellows ran to get married, under their altered statutes. She was narrating her experiences as a hostess, in an aggrieved tone ; her girls had been assured, she said, in her hearing, that "Chaperones were obsolete, and that a bride was a duenna in an aggravated form."

"Oh, that is nothing !" said another lady, "A man in lodgings, the other day, represented to me that I need not accompany my girls, since he had found a substitute for me,

in the person of his landlady, who had ‘not the least objection to be called his mother, for a single afternoon.’ It speaks well for him that she hadn’t, I’m sure.”

A third complained that, on one occasion, the undergraduate who had asked her party to take tea in his rooms, being in the boats, chanced at the hour agreed upon to be immersed in Barnwell Pool; so that after keeping them waiting for half an hour, he presently rushed through their midst to his room, dirty, dripping, and disreputable.

Everybody laughed at this; but the bride had not exhausted her vexation, so she resumed—

“That was nothing to seeing one of your girls perched up upon a window-seat before you could mount the stairs, with a group of men in the background, all happily engaged in pelting two unlucky cats, down below in the college court, with bits of coal, sugar, tea, candle-ends, and pens.” She had

also evidently believed the statement, with which she had been beguiled into indignation, that these animals were the property of medical students, intended by them for "scientific purposes." "And what do you say to that, now?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Gruter.

"Say? Why, that they wouldn't have done it, if you'd not been coming!" answered that lady promptly. "Also that you probably got your tea the hotter, since it had to be made afresh! When you are as old as I am, and have seen ten generations of men come and go, if you get tired of anything, it will not be of their fun, but of their education; not of the outcome of it, but of the process; of their 'examinations,' and their 'minds.' But I must confess that the women-students are the worst in this respect; the lads are too busy exercising their bodies, they don't ask you if you 'mind their talking about their own minds,' as it is 'naturally the subject most interesting' to them!"

“The people who are always cultivating their own minds are every bit as bad as those that are always saving their own souls!” said another lady, vehemently.

“Not at all—not at all,” replied Mrs. Gruter, philosophically. “Take them quietly and they will all turn out well in the end. The girl with a ‘mind’ will be an admirable person, when she outgrows it; and I have not the least doubt that the one who pelted the college cats will set us all an example some day. But here comes Miss Silverhayes, bringing with her charity enough to shame us all.”

Very dainty and sweet was the little old lady of whom she spoke. Her quaint silk dress, with its faded colouring, her close-fitting bonnet over a white lace cap, proclaimed her to belong to the “Society of Friends.” Her fair, fresh face, even in age, was touched with the colours of the daisy and was crowned with curls of soft white

hair. She walked with an antique, silver-mounted stick, of black ebony, and she readily accepted the chair offered her by the bride.

"Thank you, my dear," she said; "I was feeling a little wearied, though it is only a drive of three miles from the Manor-house, for I am an old woman now."

"Spirits don't become septuagenarians. You can never grow old," said Mrs. Gruter, warmly.

Nor could she, for all her life she had lived with little children, and her soul was as fresh and as innocent as one of theirs. All her days she had learnt, and laughed, and wept with the little ones, that sat on her knee and knelt at her footstool; she had looked upon life with their "blind bright eyes," and had trusted with their guileless hearts. With them she had realized the pressure of the Invisible; hand in hand she had walked with them, whilst the radiance of an un-

dimmed spirit shone in her unclouded eyes. But if she was as simple as an innocent child, "Auntie Silver," as her children called her, was yet as wise among grown-up women as a tender mother among babes. Her environment was an atmosphere of love, she breathed it forth as the flowers give off their fragrance. Her gentle hand was never known to strip the covering of sorrow from any sin, and a saddened pity was her sternest condemnation.

At her approach, flowers of courtesy sprang to birth; all grievances were apt to be forgotten; and on this occasion the little company of ladies, with one consent, dropped their critical tone. Miss Silverhayes was always blissfully sure that everybody loved everybody else, because she never heard anybody say anything in the least unkind herself; and, besides, did they not all love her, and could she count herself as an exceptional person?

“Do you know that lame man?” Miss Silverhayes now said to the bride, who had secured a chair by her side. “His name is Keltridge, and I am so sorry for him; it is so sad to see him all alone in the midst of this gay throng. I am told that he lost the girl he was hoping to marry this time last year.”

“Dear me! then he would have been married when we were, at the end of the long vacation,” said the late bride, to whom her own wedding-day was still an epoch from which everything was reckoned. “He seems as if he was looking for some one now,” she added, “and he is coming this way.”

“I wish I had had him, when he was a little boy, among my children,” mused the gentle dame aloud. “If you have taught them their letters you can sometimes venture to say a kind word to them, if they are ill or in trouble, when you meet them in after

life ; but otherwise I am not able to talk to clever men."

"My husband is very clever," said the young matron, with dignity.

"No doubt, my dear ; they are all very clever up here, lady students and all ; but, you see, I am not a modern kind of person myself. I am nothing but a little antiquated teacher of tinies ; some of whose scholars have passed on, and others have passed away. They have all left me now ; but for forty years I taught them every day, and the last comers were the grandchildren of the first ; but now my life is one long holiday."

"You do not regret the children, do you ?" asked a middle-aged lady, who had nine at home, and who sometimes sighed for a "long holiday."

"You ask me if I 'regret the children ;' well, I never knew how much I loved them till they ceased to come. I never wearied of them till they dropped away ; but I have

never wearied since ; and perhaps I needed to be quiet in my age."

But Randal Keltridge's approach diverted the conversation. He was walking up and down, seeking for companionship other than that of men with whom he daily exchanged the conventional academic nod upon the King's Parade, or in the passages of the Library, or the Union ; in fact, he was really looking for Ciceley Applewood. He had passed Margaret Gruter with Chevington Applewood, but they had not observed him, being too well satisfied with each other's society to have free use of their powers of perception ; and he had little enough reason to suppose that Ciceley would care to meet him again ; but the lonely man's parched soul was actually thirsting for its share in the kindly looks and friendly glances which were blessing more fortunate men on every side of him.

As she had dined in his room only the

night before, Mrs. Gruter felt, of course, bound to see him ; so she greeted him, when he approached her, with—

“Well, Mr. Keltridge, have your rooms recovered our invasion last night ? I am thankful to see that you are not tied to your writing-table to-day to make up for lost time. If you like to look for the rest of my party you will find them somewhere about. Professor Gruter is with them, seeking groundsel for his birds, I believe ! Yes, indeed he does,” she added, turning to an intimate lady-friend of her own standing, and lowering her voice ; “and he puts it in his hat, or in his cap, if he has it on, and drops it casually on solemn occasions. He strewed the Senate House floor the last ‘Grace’ that he went to *non placet* ; and on the Degree day last year, the undergraduates made painful allusions to chickweed, and chirped when he presented his men to the vice-chancellor. You see, he

is quite bald, and he had crowned his bare head with a little bit, poor dear! He had hurried off before either Margaret or I could see that he was decent."

Further confidences followed, during which Randal Keltridge, having obtained the countenance that he sought, had limped away again. Then Miss Silverhayes inquired for her favourite, Margaret Gruter, and on learning that she was walking round somewhere with Chevington Applewood, broke into praises of her former pupil; for Chevington had once been a little Manor-house schoolboy. From five years old to eleven he had been one of her darlings, and she smilingly told how, when he had been set by his father to write out the Church Catechism, and she, having seen his longing gaze out of the window, and pitying the slow, stiff fingers, had asked how he got on. he had bravely replied—

"Oh, I've got to go as far as 'the

kingdom of heaven ;' but it's such a long way to go, and I am so dreadfully tired !"

" I don't believe he has ever known what it is to be 'tired' since," said Mrs. Gruter ; "and his sisters are just as satisfactory in their way ; they are here now. You must see them presently, Miss Silverhayes ; they are pretty girls, and girls that don't drift. They will make their own lives."

" What, Ciceley and Helen Applewood ! Oh, I shall be glad to meet them," said the old lady, warmly. "Chevington used so often to talk of them, when he was ten years old, and they were babies in the nursery—'the creeping things,' he used to call them ; and he used to say that he should have 'dominion over them,' in allusion to Genesis, you know ; and the Creation ; on the sixth day."

"Not a bad name for babies," said the lady who had nine children.

"Well, let me bring them out to see you,"

said Mrs. Gruter, "and you will show them your lovely old house, and your delicious garden."

"Yes, bring them; bring them, pray, and your daughter, and," she added hesitatingly, "any of the gentlemen who may be inclined to show them the way."

This speech the little lady thought very cunning and wise, for she had not failed to notice Chevington Applewood's devotion to Margaret Gruter's society.

"My husband says——" began the bride, who had been left out of the conversation, for what seemed to her, an unreasonably long time; but at that instant all the older ladies began to complain of the wind, and, by common consent, the party broke up.

"Yes, my dear, and what did your husband say?" asked the old lady, as she possessed herself of her stick, for she feared that the younger woman's feelings might be hurt by the too evident indifference of the

other ladies to the opinions of that absent oracle. "I like to hear what husbands say, because I have none of my own ; but somehow I generally prefer it as their wives tell it to me. But come, let us take a turn round ; you may meet your husband by the entrance-gate, as you say he is coming for you ; and I may find some of my children scattered up and down."

The crowds of people thronging the beautiful walks and lawns, or strolling along the grassy slopes by the river, saw the Backs of the colleges that day in all their loveliest apparel of the spring, gaily and greenly running on into the summer. In the wilderness of St. John's College, where Keltridge had led Ciceley Applewood, that she might admire its beauties, the ground at their feet was carpeted with flowers, the blue hyacinths and white anemones yet lingering, while the lily of the valley and Solomon's seal had scarcely dispossessed the orchis and cycla-

men; overhead the interlacing branches of the trees were alive with wings in every leafy nook, whilst the clamour of the rooks in their tops almost drowned the music borne to the ear upon the wind.

It was a day on which to dream that the heavens would never stoop and gloom, the trees cease to shade, nor the flowers to spring; and yet the thoughts of both these people were out of harmony with their surroundings.

Keltridge could not get rid of himself, could not lay his personality at the feet of another; hence his manner had no grace, his voice no tones which appealed to the heart, even when addressing one whom he most desired to please. The attitude of his mind was essentially a combative one; he was well aware that he had not produced a favourable impression upon this girl's fancy the evening before; and, after all the guests were gone, he had sat alone

in the deserted room, in the silence of the night, and had thought with bitterness of certain bountiful youths among the undergraduates of his college, who were always getting into trouble with worried tutors and anxious parents, and whose names were a byword at "discipline meetings," from a lavish disposition to give themselves, and all that was theirs—time, money, and affections—away. In his secret soul he knew it was something not far removed from envy, which always goaded him on to support the side of "counsel for the prosecution," on these occasions.

It was true of him that, even when actually thirsting for genial and sympathetic intercourse with his fellows, a chance word would bring all his combativeness to the front. He could not help displaying the fangs of his critical faculty, and by sheer force of biting argument he ranged every associate among his adversaries. It

is a fact which men of this order of mind never see, that no man or woman is ever convinced by argument, unsupported by persuasion, of anything, save that their opponent is a cantankerous fellow, with a nasty temper, who ought to recognize the demands of society better than to make it a battle-ground after this fashion. Now he was going to try again. He thought he had seen where he went wrong at dinner ; and if only Miss Applewood would smile upon him, he believed he could do better this afternoon.

And, as it happened, Ciceley was in a mood more favourable for his endeavours. She was suffering from that strange experience which comes upon sensitive people, when they become aware of having given expression to thoughts which may henceforth remain associated with their image in the minds of those who have heard them, more likely as marks for adverse

criticism than for sympathetic comment. Hence her disposition this afternoon was to be more receptive ; she was more inclined to listen to whatever her companion might choose to say than she had been the evening before.

Keltridge noticed the change in her manner at once, although he did not understand it ; and, by taking advantage of it, succeeded in leading her away from her sister's and Professor Gruter's society, in order to tell her all about the college buildings and gardens, by which they were surrounded. Here, at least, he was in the solid region of fact, upon which he was qualified to speak, for he was a most reliable authority upon matters of college history ; and Ciceley listened with praiseworthy docility.

But when he had exhausted the subject of such of the buildings as he had selected to talk about, and had taken her through

“Trinity Roundabout,” and “St. John’s Wilderness,” and was bringing her back over Clare Bridge, he was just stooping to detach for her a specimen of the only kind of fern that grows in the old walls of the colleges, when suddenly they came face to face with Chevington Applewood and Margaret Gruter ; and Ciceley, lifting her eyes to theirs, saw in a moment that the secret which had before been cherished in the hearts of these two, having been exchanged between them, might now be read by those that ran.

The observation sent the warm blood flushing her fair young face, and, indeed, of the four people who thus met, three were visibly embarrassed. Their lips said nothing, but their eyes confessed much. Keltridge, however, looking up with his fragment of fern in his hand, was blind to all that went on around him ; and had, happily for him, no glimmering suspicion of the im-

patient longing which had suddenly seized upon all the other three to be rid of him. Only to see him go!

"Its scientific name is '*Asplenium Ruta Muraria*,'" he said, slightly recognizing the others' presence, but holding out to Ciceley, with persistence, the dusty morsel.

She was forced to take it, and to continue her return towards the spot where she had left Mrs. Gruter, with him by her side. But she could not collect her thoughts again, and she punished the wretched little fern for Keltridge's obtuseness, by pulling it to bits and dropping it at the earliest opportunity.

"I'm sure he's a growth of college walls himself," she thought. "*Ruta Muraria*, '*Wall Rue*;' why, he is positively one of the same family!" and she flung the last little fragment behind her as she made the reflection. Then she mentally dismissed the poor man, and fell to thinking only about Chevington and Margaret.

She was feeling all the strangeness and difficulty of looking upon her brother as an accepted lover. It quite oddly disconcerted her. Chevington was an excellent brother, no doubt, and a most admirable man, and of course they were all very proud of him; but, as a lover, Ciceley could not picture him. A man is generally quite prepared to regard his sisters from another man's point of view; but a girl seldom considers her brother with the eyes of any other girl, until she is forced so to do. Therefore Ciceley now experienced an emotion, in contemplating this development of affairs, which prevented her from perceiving the advances which the man by her side was making, in his efforts to secure her separate company. Going round at all, however, soon became insupportable to her, in her altered frame of mind, and she manœuvred a return to the lawn, and to Mrs. Gruter's society.

The chapel bell was ringing; the gardens

were emptying fast. An elderly tutor, frank of speech and rugged of manner, one of a race now fast passing away, was hastening the departure of the ladies of his acquaintance with a rough good-humour peculiar to him.

“Yes, yes; good-bye, good-bye to you all. Got Brown with you? Well, you may take him too, if you like him. (Aside.) I don’t! I’ve had too much of ‘Boys,’ and apparently these young ladies haven’t. Good-bye!” At this energetic exhortation all the company hastened to depart.

Mrs. Gruter’s maternal emotion, which had been smothered all the afternoon, could no longer be denied its exercise, and, with Chevington on one side and her daughter on the other, she hastily led the way. Professor Gruter followed, his pockets bulging with dandelions, destined for a salad for his rabbits; and the downy seeds floated on the air and made him sneeze every time

that he extracted his pocket-handkerchief. Ciceley hastened to rejoin him and Helen, but not before Keltridge had had opportunity to assure her that he would meet her again that evening, when there was to be music and dancing in the college hall.

There were few things in life which, if they had any beauty, or any pathos, in them, failed to attract Helen Applewood's sympathetic attention ; and at the concert in the college hall that evening she had occasion to observe with regret Randal Keltridge's pathetic attempts to root himself in Ciceley's wandering good-will. She alone noted what was occurring ; for the rest of the party, including Ciceley herself, were quite taken up with the successful lovers, who were growing more radiant every hour in the beautifying glow of their own bliss and of the family approval. So self-absorbed was Randal Keltridge that he never even perceived where the engrossing family interest

lay. Chevington and Margaret were like peaches growing on the right side of the wall, under the ripening sunshine—their beauty was a thing to rejoice in; but the man with the frail body and the solitary, aching soul, on the other side, was straining eagerly—and Helen knew how vainly—after the sunshine too; she saw it and sighed.

The undergraduates performed their musical parts—they had got some ladies to help them; the choir-boys sang glees; the hall was gay with flowers; there were ices and refreshments in the combination-room, which the Fellows struggled to secure for their guests, and Keltridge strove with the rest. The whole affair was a pleasant party, rather than an ordinary musical opportunity. But with the end of the concert, came the end of Randal's tether. He could not face the festivities of the ball; he well knew what his fate would be: to stand by the door.

with his lameness ever apparent ; to realize bitterly how he was misplaced, and to be annoyed by the superior advantages of those who had done nothing to deserve better of fortune. He made one more attempt, however, to extend the moments that were his ; whilst they were clearing the hall for the dance, he insisted upon showing Ciceley the library. To reach it he had to conduct her up and down two staircases, and along a stone passage, and, when they got there, they found the place in utter darkness. This was unexpected, and vexed him ; he had imagined that on this evening it would be open and lighted up for the inspection of visitors. However, he procured candles from the combination-room, and preceded her through the narrow passages between the long lines of book-shelves, relating the stock story of the ancient Fellow who had hanged himself there and had not been discovered for months, thereby casting an

odour of ill fame upon the learning of the college ; nor did he even spare her the yet more gruesome undergraduate legend of the student whom somebody vivisected within those walls in order to discover the circulation of the blood.

Ciceley shuddered, and drew her light garments round her, from contact with the dusty floor and shelves ; she wanted to keep her pretty finery fresh for the anticipated moments of the dance ; the place was cold and very dark, in spite of the flickering, yellow light of the wax candles, which her inconsiderate conductor carried, guttering from upright silver candlesticks. She cared not a scrap for books or library, and was only extremely anxious to get back to her party, but did not like to seem discourteous.

“ How fond he is of his college ! ” she thought, making a final advance towards the door ; and she had reason to come to this

conclusion ; for, in his growing disinclination to relinquish her company for the sake of the fleet-footed young fellows who might be waiting for it below in the hall, he led her away again, this time without even an apology, down a different staircase into that capacious reception-room known as the college kitchen. Here he called upon her to admire the roasting-apparatus ; and when Chevington appeared a few minutes later in search of his sister, Keltridge was positively romancing about the number of joints that could be cooked there at once.

Thankful for her deliverance, the girl escaped with her brother, who, carefully winding his gown about her neck, and putting his cap upon her head, took her back by a quicker way across the courts, in the still night air.

“What a very odd man he is !” she said. “So very persistent. It doesn’t matter whether it’s plants, books, or beef, he must

always be teaching you something. And I don't want to learn ; I only want to enjoy myself. I'm not grateful for instruction ; and I don't believe his own pupils are. Why, he is a kind of perambulating college encyclopædia."

"Perhaps Miss Fayle did not find him so," said Chevington, gravely ; for his own newly found treasure of joy made him pitiful towards the man whose love was supposed to have been snatched from his grasp.

"That was quite different, of course," responded Ciceley, with equal seriousness.

"Not at all ; it was just the same," answered Applewood.

The words startled his sister ; she looked up quickly, to detect his meaning ; but he went on without seeming to intend any further application of what he had said.

"He led her round just the same : she was up for three Mays. She saw the roasting

apparatus, poor thing, at least once every year."

"Poor thing!" echoed Ciceley, with meaning.

Had he been less full of his own happiness, Chevington might have noted the effect of his words upon his pretty sister; but he saw nothing, and thought of nothing that night, but that he was going to dance with Margaret until two o'clock the next morning; and afterwards to spend the rest of a long and blessed existence in her society.

At that hour, or rather later, Keltridge, half awaking out of sleep, heard Applewood bounding up the steep stairs to his own room, singing beneath his voice the refrain of a ringing waltz; and Keltridge, hearing it, turned round with the determination not to linger ere his feet carried him limping to a like bliss. He had progressed so slowly the last time that the grass had

grown over Olive Fayle's grave before he had reached his goal. Ciceley Applewood looked healthy enough, and this time he would not be too late.





CHAPTER IV.

TWO or three days after the college dance, Ciceley and Helen Applewood were going with Margaret Gruter to lunch at Millmead Manor-house with Miss Silverhayes.

During this interval Applewood's engagement to Margaret Gruter had become known to all the college; and Randal Keltridge, for purposes of his own, had been acting as his shadow. Consequently, when the three young ladies and Applewood approached the boat-house to engage a boat for their row down to Millmead, Keltridge likewise put in an appearance, just as they were taking their places, and Applewood,

in his easy, good-natured way, bade him make himself useful by steering. Ciceley, who was sitting in the stern, immediately crossed over to the bow, and left Helen to address remarks to him at intervals assigned by convention, or possibly even by commiseration.

Millmead Manor-house had been in the Silverhayes family for generations. The said family had now dwindled down to the gentle dame who alone occupied it, and to her nephew, Unwin Silverhayes. He was a Fellow of the same college to which Applewood and Keltridge belonged, but was not in residence. At present he was practising medicine in London, and was reported to be "a very rising man." Some day, he always told his aunt, he fully intended to restore the property, for it had fallen into a state of considerable disrepair. The family fortunes had decreased constantly; for many years Miss Silverhayes

had, as she has told us, practically converted the Manor-house into a school for little boys and girls; and her nephew had sunk all his slender capital in buying an interest as junior partner in the practice of the fashionable physician, whom he assisted. There were many valuables in the house, pictures and tapestries which might have been converted into money to rebuild the ancient home; but neither Miss Silverhayes nor her nephew would have consented to this. So long as she could go in and out, and share with her friends the beauties of the picturesque house in which she had been born, Miss Silverhayes was more than contented; whilst her nephew's confident ambition satisfied him that at no very distant date he would found the family afresh, and restore its ancient birthplace.

Millmead Manor-house stood upon a beautiful lawn which sloped down to the

river. A magnificent chestnut alley skirted its banks, to which the copper beech and the silver aspen contributed a perpetual variety of colour and foliage. There was a private landing-place, and a moss-grown boat-house, in which an unsafe boat, belonging to the house, yet lay; but a couple of robins were rearing their brood in the bow, and they flew out in startled alarm as Chevington ran his craft into the bank, and assisted the three girls to alight in safety by the rotting steps, upon the lawn. There he and Keltridge left them, to spend some hours with their friend. Margaret and Chevington took a turn round first, however, and exchanged a lover's adieu, whilst Keltridge minded the boat.

"Don't bring Mr. Keltridge back again, Chevington," she whispered, "when you come in the afternoon. Don't you see how he is vexing Ciceley by always following you? She doesn't want him here, you know."

“Am I likely to let him come,” he answered almost indignantlly, “when I am to row you back alone? I understood that your mother was to call for my sisters in her afternoon drive; do you suppose he is going to steer for us two?” At this they laughed and parted.

Left alone, the three girls lingered to admire the peaceful beauty of the scene. At their feet the water rippled and plashed, kept clear by the agitation of the mill-wheel, not a hundred yards away. Over their heads the chestnuts were in flower, their long pink pyramids mingling with the white stars of the double cherry and the blossoms of the apple trees which grew nearer to the edge of the mossy lawn. In the middle of the expanse of grass a fountain played; its basin of broken grey stone was covered with a low luxuriant growth of single roses, white and red; and to it the presiding genius of the place daily

came to feed the gold-fish in the basin, and to scatter grain for the doves that strutted round. Beyond, an ancient sundial yet cast a shadow upon a time-worn stone, which, by a fancy of some long-buried ancestor, still showed, upon a silver crescent, with the date of its erection, Bishop King's motto—

“The dew dries up ; the star is shot ;
The flight is passed ; the man forgot.”

The glass-house, which stood near, was overgrown with roses, sorely in need of training ; and its little panes of discoloured glass were patched with daubs of mortar ; but the whole colouring was a harmonious effort of Nature's handiwork. Broken also, for the most part, were the rustic benches which stood about ; but who would have exchanged them for the smartest garden-chairs in Cambridge ?

In autumn the sense of neglect and decay might possibly have been depressing ; but in

these bounteous days of May, laden with the prophecy of summer, it was to the young girls' hearts simply a dream of delight, as fresh as the year's joys. The picture would, however, have been incomplete without the house, which fronted them at the further end of the lawn; with its gabled roofs, its tiny casements, its long ground-floor windows, opening out beneath a covered verandah; the whole mantled with a luxuriant growth of roses and of sweetly scented creeping plants. This venerable legacy of the past fitly enshrined the peaceful age of one whose work was done. Yet around its now silent hearths the loves, and hopes, and fears of bygone generations lingered still; upon the lawns the happy voices of departed children in listening ears still rung. There was not a mossy nook nor a time-worn stone in the old building that had not been consecrated by the touch of vanished hands, which had not been the birthplace of long-

buried hopes, or the tomb of some forgotten tragedy.

With one accord Margaret and her friends stood still, almost awed by the contrast of this repose with the agitation and the restless activities of the place they had left. There, all was heard and seen, nay, even forced upon their notice; here, the soft rustle of the trees seemed to whisper only the secrets of a bygone age, or of an invisible universe.

“Margaret! Margaret! we should take off our shoes!” cried Helen. “The place is holy ground! This garden might be full of shining ones, and these golden drops of sunshine but the shadows of their glory. If only our eyes were opened! All the plants have souls; and she surely knows it, this lady, who is ‘very small,’ and ‘loves to dwell in lowly vales.’ I don’t believe her knife has ever caused a flower to bleed; they all grow here according to the spirit

that is in them. This house is an embodiment of the best poetic thought of past generations. It is a shrine; not a builder's fabric of brick and mortar! One ought to float, and not to walk over these velvet lawns!"

"Yes," replied Margaret, "it is very restful. To come here, as I have often done, out of the friction, the stir, and the competition of University life is to go, in a few short miles, a century and a half back in thought and feeling. The beauty that they loved in those days, seems to have been essentially a beauty of repose. No doubt they had their discords, those old Silverhayeses; but they are all silenced now by death, which eternally harmonizes their memories."

"It is a place to return to, but only to worship, or to die, when one can enjoy and suffer no longer," exclaimed Helen. "I could not rest here before my work is half begun. I must see life. I must know all

that it can hold for striving men and agonized women. I must measure the height and the depth of all the waves in the sea of my fate!"

"As for me," said Ciceley, positively, "I mean to wait for my ideal until I find it; there can be but one perfect realization of love for any one of us; and no matter across what empty years it may carry me, until I hold it in my grasp, as I have seen it in my imagination, I will not accept any lower lot."

"And I," said Margaret, serenely, "am satisfied with my present great joy; and I will welcome whatever sorrows may come after, as its purchase."

The sunlight fled across the garden, chased by the clouds of spring, and the girls' moods varied with the change from sun to shadow. With one consent they turned towards the house.

"Well," said Ciceley, affecting a sigh, "it

is clear that I am to be always as a bride waiting for my bridegroom ; whilst Margaret grows old beside her lord ; but your future, Helen, is not made clear to us in that respect."

" I fancy," said Helen, gravely, " that in my scheme of life, marriage figures rather as a means than as an end in itself ; whilst Ciceley admits that she sees no further, I look incessantly beyond."

" I wonder," said Margaret, doubtfully, " if Mr. Keltridge, for instance, has any idea that Ciceley is so romantic."

" The sooner he learns it the better," answered Ciceley, decisively. " Helen, you must take that man away if he comes over here this afternoon, which I fully expect him to do. I give him to you freely ; pray relieve me of him. It will enlarge your desired experience of life to take him in hand at once."

" I pity him," said Helen ; " there is surely

something very pathetic about him. We are all such poor creatures ourselves that I can't see why we should profess to demand ideal beings to live with. I should demand that the man I am to marry should be good and just and true; but I should not expect any more perfection than I bring; and I should not regard our common lot as an end, but merely as an incident in our experience."

"Shall you not even require that he should love you?" asked Ciceley, with a touch of satire.

"According to his capacity; but not to the narrowing of his whole nature to the demands of one woman. My love should be a haven in which he might anchor his heart; but in which he should not always remain. Love varies, and I do not see what claims I possess to demand any unusual devotion. All that a woman, who is very faulty herself, has any right to expect

is a good man, who loves her as well as he is able."

"Helen, you are cold-blooded! You talk like a lawyer, or a philosopher, and not like a girl of nineteen," exclaimed Ciceley, almost angrily. "As for me, I will wait all my life for the perfection of love; that is to say, for love corresponding to my own highest capacity."

"Ah, I should be afraid of that!" whispered Helen. "I will not attempt to make my own life. I will take it as it comes. If I never try for my own greatest happiness, I shall be able to live in the lives of others—to go in and out among them, sharing their griefs and joys without fear and without hindrance; I shall comprehend their lives, shall learn with them, and suffer with them."

"But what," objected Margaret, gently, "if, after having thus accepted a secondary lot for yourself, you chance to meet with

that ideal affection, that inevitable soul-half, which Ciceley believes in?"

"Then, God help me!" sighed Helen. "Yet I must do as I have said. I have no real choice. You do not know the force of the passion that drives me; and where I am driven I must go. We are none of us free; that idea is a delusion. As we are made so we must act. It is a necessity. It is my fate. I must take my own happiness in my hand, and go wherever men and women need my help. If I reject and renounce beforehand, perhaps God will be merciful to me, and will never show me what I have done, but will let me live with my eyes blinded."

"Helen, it is a mistake!" said Margaret, earnestly.

"Shall you call your marriage 'a mistake,' Margaret, if Chevington dies within a year? All our ways are full of mistakes; yet we can but follow the dictates of our own

nature. We are all gathering sticks for our own funeral pyres. We may delude ourselves into imagining that we select them; but, when the moment comes that the flames are lighted, if we were conscious of it, I do not suppose that we should regret that we built the pile, for we should still recognize the inevitable."

"But in the end?"

"Ah, that is too far on! If we meet again here, thirty years hence, let us tell it to one another. But see, here comes the fairy godmother. I wonder, now, why she has never married," said Ciceley.

"Mother says," replied Margaret, "that Miss Silverhayes never needed the education of possession; she counts her children by the score, and finds love enough for them all."

Miss Silverhayes came towards them with hands outstretched in welcome.

"Here you are!" she said. "You have

seen my garden ; now come and see my house." And she led them into the long drawing-room, or "parlour," which was hung with ancient tapestries, representing scenes from the Old Testament history. These valuable tapestries had been purchased for a mere trifle by her father, Laban Silverhayes, when some old bursar had had them stripped from the walls of his college dining-hall, in order to carry out the ideas of his time as to restoration. "And so," she said, "the world goes round ; what the last generation admired we call 'hideous ;' but go a generation or two further back still, and the same fashions recur. My parlour now is the admiration of every one because my father hung it with the rejected rags of his own time."

"But what is this oak stand in front of the window ? What is it for ?" asked Ciceley.

"That, my dear, is the printing-press—

for printing by hand ; here are the drawers of type, you see. My father bought this at an auction in the town, when the new press was built by the University. He bought up all these beautiful old wood-carvings and these engravings also. He was always an interested collector. See these wainscots and overmantels, as they call them now ; and these corner cupboards ; all come in again, and imitated everywhere ; but these are genuine old oak carvings, which once adorned college halls or chapels. As to the printing-press : he used to print his books here himself in this very room. He not only composed them, as all the men in Cambridge do—they're all writing a book, you know, every one of them—but he printed them, and illustrated them, and bound them himself, and all in this house. He was a lover of antiquities, a noted genealogist, and his works are still esteemed of value and authority. His books were his

children, in as real a sense as we were ourselves. See, I have a whole shelf of them facing you. Look at the beautiful neatness and finish of the bindings; but they are not the ditto of each other; each copy of any work of his has its own peculiarities; his earlier efforts at printing and binding did not rival his later achievements; and he loved to trace his own progress by his increased perfection in every detail of the art. The head-piece of every chapter is a thought; and the finale a veritable adieu to the reader. Sometimes he would print a book for a friend; but never unless he thoroughly approved the matter as good, and entirely deserving of publication. Here is his inscription, see! ‘*Laban Silverhayes. Printed at his private press, at Millmead Manor, A.D. 1800.*’ ”

Then the active little lady showed them all the bedchambers, opening into each other along the narrow passages, with scarcely a

fireplace among them, and a step up on one side and down on another to nearly all the doors, so that any unwary intruder entering in the dark would probably be pitched head foremost into the middle of the floor. She pointed out that all the walls were full of cupboards, wardrobes being a French novelty reserved for brides, in the days when those rooms were occupied. None of the leaded diamond casements really closed, and all the boards were strikingly uneven; but no one minded trifles such as these when such a solid house was built. In one room a row of wooden box bedsteads still showed where Miss Silverhayes had slept, with her brother and sister, as a child.

“And now,” she said, “I am left alone! But come,” she added, after a pause, “and see my kitchen. It is the very opposite of the college kitchens, which, no doubt, you have been shown.”

“Don’t speak of them!” exclaimed Ciceley,

urged by a remembrance to the others unknown.

“In my kitchen we never cook anything bigger than a fowl,” said Miss Silverhayes; “we put a basket of hot coals in the middle of the monstrous old fireplace, and that suffices for Ellen and me.”

“What a delightful place!” said Margaret Gruter. “And oh, those delicious blue plates! What lovely old china! Most people would put them up on racks, in the drawing-room.”

“Yes, my mother rarely loved the best old china she could get, and my father used to gratify her taste. There is not a common plate or cup in all the house.”

“What, not for Ellen—not for your maid?” they asked.

“Oh, Ellen loves a mug and plate given her by the dairyman; and I use always the same cup and plate that I have used for years; somehow I could not fancy any

others! If I saw different people eating off a plate or drinking out of a cup I was likely to use, I should not enjoy my food unless I loved the folks."

"But *you* love every one, don't you?" said Margaret.

"Well, my dear," the fairy godmother answered, with a quaint smile, "I love the idea of them, but the representation is not always to my taste; and the influence remains long after the impress of the lips is wiped away; it is like being kissed by some one with whom you are not quite in sympathy."

Then, seeing the girls look puzzled by what she had confessed, she added apologetically—

"You see, one does get into 'ways,' living so much alone. We have very little to do here now, and we are so very quiet. Ellen looks out at the back door with her bodily eyes, and on into the future when she shall

have married the dairyman, with her mind's eye; and I sit in the long parlour and look out over the garden, where I hope to see my nephew's children playing at some future day, and backwards over the past with my inner eyes; and so we spend our days in peace. But come now to luncheon; and, Margaret, tell me all you have to tell before your mother and Mr. Applewood arrive."

Not two hours afterwards the peace of this Eden was jarred, as the gentle mistress little expected, by the dissonance of human passion. Ciceley was in the old schoolroom, looking over some embroideries of ancient date, the work of Miss Silverhayes's grandmother, when Helen came in quietly, and said—

"He is here, Ciceley."

"Who? Chevington? At present that chiefly concerns Margaret; I can't tear myself away from this exquisite old frock for a mere man and a brother."

"Yes, Chevington is here, and Mrs. Gruter has come ; but so has Mr. Keltridge—he came in the boat."

"Then all I can say is," said Ciceley, letting the ancient garment fall, and speaking with heightened colour, "that Chevington deserves to have to row him back, sitting between Margaret and himself ! It's too bad of Chevington ; he has sense for nothing in these blissful days. How is the creature going to get back, I should like to know ! He can't walk. I suppose he has counted the seats in the carriage, and is reckoning on sitting beside you, and opposite me, all the way back to Cambridge. Look here, Helen ; you and I walk back together, and by the fields, over those three stiles—he can't face them. Where is he ? What is the creature doing ?"

"He is sitting in the drawing-room."

"I know, in the way as he always is, exactly between Miss Silverhayes and Mrs.

Gruter ; looking furtively about upon the carpet, as though one was a mouse, or a beetle, to issue from a hole in the corner and be pursued ; never lifting his eyes boldly, like a man ! Oh, I can see him without going down ! ”

“ Ciceley, you are cruel ! Is it his fault that he admires you ? ”

“ No ! It is his fault that he admires himself more. I’ve a good mind to go off across the fields by myself, and to send you down to say I’m taken ill. I am ill ! He makes me sick ! I am very ill ! He makes me old and worn ! ”

She turned ; but Helen had disappeared, and for very shame she followed her.

“ Helen ! ” she cried, “ stick to me ! Don’t leave me for a second ! Helen, you must and shall be a third ; do you hear ? ”

“ Yes, I hear,” said Helen, turning her head ; “ and I will do it for his sake, not for yours, for you are cruel ! ”

In a very few moments Ciceley and Helen were once more walking round the Manor-house garden, closely accompanied by Keltridge, and all the light had faded from their fair young faces. In seeming, the blithe year had leapt from May into November. This man had actually absorbed the sunshine, and yet he radiated none; not one spark of its divine brightness did he reflect back again; and he had extinguished Ciceley's buoyant vitality, without a conception of what he had done. Neither she nor Helen looked now as if they could ever have laughed, or ever meant to laugh again; and the words of their "prophecies" still in the air seemed to be already auguries laden with dooms! Helen, true to her promise, was sticking so closely to her sister's side as to permit Keltridge no inconvenient interview. Chevington had carried Margaret off, for the perfect dual solitude of a row home together; and Mrs. Gruter was listening,

with active content, to the gentle self-revelations of the sweet soul in the tapestried chamber. Ciceley and Helen were consequently left to a formal perambulation of the spot which had been an Eden to them but an hour before; but which was now converted into a dungeon by the presence of one imprisoned soul, painfully striving, with solitary struggles, for freedom. And since the human soul remains for ever and everywhere the crowning entity amidst creation, the pain of this one had power to extinguish the mirth and to render audible the groans of the whole animate and inanimate environment. The light was changed, the scent of the flowers became mere smell, instead of being a vivifying essence, a very breath of life; the air felt chilly, the trees sighed, the doves mourned, the waters of the river suggested melancholy thoughts of decay and doom. At last it grew to be a veritable torture. Only

articulate speech could break the malignity of the human spell ; and Ciceley, impulsive ever, determined to meet her fate and to disarm it.

“This is cowardly!” she said to herself. “The man wants to deliver his soul. It is his own salvation he is bent on working out, though he little knows it! Anger, or pain, or any human emotion would be healthful compared to this stifling oppression. It is not for me to assign limits to his efforts after freedom. After all, as Helen urges, it is pathetic, this isolation of an aching soul, that cannot touch another at any point, but yearns and strives consciously in its bondage. He is past even making believe at talking ; and yet it is true, he has no real inclination towards me, no scrap of love for me. I cannot be mistaken. He is thinking only of himself, only and always of himself ; and yet, for his own sake, Helen shall go. There are times when

silence is simply deadly, and this man's egoism is extinguishing the very sunshine above our heads."

"Helen!" she said, with a significant glance, caught by the quick observation of her sister, "please go and see if the carriage will be round soon; we have been walking up and down so long that I am tired."

And tired indeed she looked; her young face actually worn with weariness. Helen sighed for sympathy, and went. She had no need to read the lines that showed now on Ciceley's forehead; she understood them. Keltridge saw his opportunity and thought that he had made it; turned a shade paler beneath the sallowness of his ordinary complexion, determined that this time, at any rate, he would not be the victim of any arrow of fate, hesitated a moment in speech—not in intention—and then abruptly said—

"Miss Applewood, I have to congratulate

you on your brother's engagement to Miss Gruter; he is a fortunate man."

Ciceley assented briefly. Why delay the inevitable, or add to the embarrassment of the situation? It was clear he would speak; he had, at any rate, a right to an answer.

"I,"—he hesitated.

"Yes! it begins with 'I,' not with 'you,'" was Ciceley's lightning-flash of criticism.

"I wish I might be equally fortunate. I should esteem myself happy if you would kindly listen to me as Miss Gruter has listened to your brother."

Ciceley turned slightly towards him, with a gesture sufficient to signify that she heard his words, but found in them nothing particularly deserving of attention. He wished she would have given him some sign of encouragement, but none came; so he baldly added—

"I am anxious to ask you to be my wife."

No word of affection! Ciceley noted it,

and honoured the man for the rectitude which forbade him to utter words unsanctioned by the dictates of his heart.

With plainness equal to his own she replied stiffly, "That is out of the question, Mr. Keltridge:" then saw that she would be immediately asked for a reason, and that it would be impossible to assign one, without preparing the way for further discussion of the proposal than she could tolerate. If a man asks a woman, "Why won't you have me?" and she replies, "Because you do not love me," she invites protestations which she may believe will be untrue; and she may even suggest some superior tenderness on her own part which has taught her the lack on his.

Therefore, in answer to Keltridge's immediate question, "For what reason?" Ciceley hurriedly answered, "Oh, I cannot give you reasons. Pray accept the fact;" and, so saying, she turned towards the house.

“Even when a woman loves a man,” she thought indignantly, “does this creature suppose that she drops into his arms in this fashion? ‘I wish you to be my wife,’ and—Heigh! Presto!—the girl is to say, ‘Thank you kindly, sir!’ to take his arm at once, and forthwith to commence the tramp together that is to carry her along the road towards a golden wedding-day half a century ahead!”

Some dim suspicion of the same fact probably penetrated Keltridge’s mind. He must speak to Miss Applewood of herself, he felt, before he could speak to her further of himself; so he kept his place by her side, in spite of her repulse, with some show of determination.

“I have not known you long, Miss Applewood,” he said judicially, “but I have seen enough to value and admire you more than any one else I ever met before.”

Ciceley thought of Olive Fayle. Was he,

then, even false to the dead girl's memory? At least he might cultivate the common grace which respects the memory of the dead! A heightened tone of colour and emphasis of speech added to her beauty as she said—

“We will not discuss the matter at all, if you please. It is out of the question that I should consider it, even for a moment. Do not let us speak of it further. I must go back now to Mrs. Gruter.”

Yet something of the pity first inspired by Helen's words restrained her still. She would not wound if she could help it, angry as she was.

“I am very sorry,” she added, willing to dismiss him with a kindly word, much as you would throw a dog a bone to be rid of him. Perhaps a woman always finds it easy to be sorry for a man who has petitioned in vain for the privilege of possessing her.

The path narrowed, the blue periwinkles and tall stray plants of columbine and honesty trailed across it; Keltridge, hindered by his lameness, found it difficult to maintain his position by her side, as she in no way facilitated his efforts. Presently he accidentally dropped his stick, and, in stooping to recover it, caught his lame foot in some tangled runners of "Old Man's Vine" that had flung themselves across the path; he stumbled, and had he not instinctively caught at his companion's arm for support, he would have fallen outright.

"You did not hurt yourself?" she asked, turning kindly.

The annoying incident reminded him of his infirmity, which for a moment he was not considering; in a sudden fit of unreasoning anger he persuaded himself that it was the cause of his rejection—was rendered indignant by the pain, less of her refusal than of his own ill-luck. He could have

cursed his fate aloud ; but as that might not be, he stammered out in bitter wrath a repetition of his demand to know the reason why he was refused. He offered her his soul to stab, feeling that any thrust which might render his dumb agony articulate would be a relief in disguise ; and had Ciceley's brief experience of pity been of the quality which is akin to love, she might now have afforded him the poor alleviation which he sought. But it was not so ; it was but a feeble sentiment engendered by her gentle breeding, and under the provocation of his angry self-assertion she grew cruelly indifferent to the evidence of his suffering.

"I do not choose," she said, "to speak upon the matter again ; if you thought at all, except about yourself, you would know that there are ways of asking a woman to marry you which are little better than an affront."

With those words she left him, and joined

the older ladies in the tapestried chamber, passing in by the opened windows.

Helen, standing there, gazed earnestly at her glowing countenance and at her angry eyes, saw and understood all that had happened; then, moved by some sudden motive force, as surprising to herself as to her sister, she hastily stepped out into the verandah, and, taking a short cut round the house by a secluded shrubbery, reached the front gate just as Keltridge had his hand upon it, prepared to make the attempt to walk back.

"Mrs. Gruter has a seat in her carriage for you, Mr. Keltridge," she said. "She expects you to drive back with her;" whilst to herself she apologized thus, "I am not compromising Ciceley; he watched us as she passed me, and he must have seen that she did not send me."

"You really cannot walk," she added kindly; "it will be such a dusty tramp along

the roads. My sister and I would not attempt it; we are going to return by the fields."

Now, perhaps for the first time, Keltridge looked at Helen Applewood attentively. It was Ciceley's face that returned his glance, but with a shadow over it, a shadow which softened its expression and deepened its colouring; it showed greater intensity of feeling, and looked five or six years older than Ciceley's. Take Ciceley out of the sunshine, set her in the twilight of a long and anxious day, and you would have Helen; yet there was a wonderful brightness in the eyes when she smiled, so that you never missed the laughter which rippled over her sister's gayer face. Also in her voice, less vibrantly rich in bird-like notes, there were tones which came straight from the soul.

Moved for an instant by an unknown emotion, Keltridge wondered if his mother

had she lived, might not have spoken to her little lame boy like that; when Helen repeated, without pretending not to consider his lameness—

“You had far better accept Mrs. Gruter’s offer. It is really quite too far for you to walk.”

He felt that she knew all that had happened; he knew that in her eyes he was a poor afflicted man, who had just had to depend upon the girl whom he had asked to marry him to save him from falling over a few insignificant weeds in the path, and who could not trust himself to walk three or four miles home again without support. He felt that she would imagine him ridiculous in asking a light-hearted being like her sister to consider him with favour as a possible husband; at best the fact of his infirmity was prominent in her mind merely as a ground of pity; and yet all his anger died. He had meant

to drag himself every step of the way back to college, cherishing his wrath as a spring of enabling energy ; but now, just because this other girl stood by, and looked at him so unflinchingly, out of those kind, calm eyes, he simply said, in an altered tone—

“ Thank you, you are very good. The walk would really have been beyond my powers. I accept Mrs. Gruter’s offer gratefully.”

“ Good-bye,” she said ; “ we return to London to-morrow, my sister and I.”

Then, giving him her hand with a frank kindness, she re-entered the house, and Mrs. Gruter appeared in search of her carriage. Presently, as he sat opposite to her, he saw the two sisters taking their way across a distant field-path towards the town. Mrs. Gruter made an effort to talk to him ; but it cannot be said that he attended to her. It is so much less a matter what a woman says to any man, than who the

woman herself is that says it ; this it is which weights any woman's words sufficiently for any man's memory to retain. Middle-aged ladies were not interesting to him, so by the time that her carriage had disappeared Keltridge had forgotten all Mrs. Gruter's remarks, however wisely expressed ; but he saw and felt still every look upon Helen Applewood's sweet face as she stood before him at the gate of the Manor-house.





CHAPTER V.

MARGARET GRUTER proposed to be married upon her mother and father's silver wedding-day, the thirteenth of July; but her mother would not hear of it; she did not desire, she said, to provoke cheap comparisons and worthless congratulations; in reality, as Margaret instinctively felt, the mother shrank from blending the memories of her own past with her daughter's future. So an earlier day in July was chosen.

“Margaret, that man's love frightens me,” her mother said to her as they sat together, on the eve of the day selected, when Chevington had just left them for the last

time before appearing as a bridegroom in the morning.

Margaret looked up at her mother with a grave smile which awaited further enlightenment; her lover's triumphant exclamation was still ringing in her ears, "Margaret! By our love we are immortal! In our love is our faith hidden!"

"Yes, I will try and explain what I mean," continued Mrs. Gruter. "It exalts him to such a height that I cannot see where it is to carry him next. Some exercise will have to be found for all these god-like energies which are being developed in him by his worship of you, my daughter, or they may prove self-destructive; and what further worlds he is to conquer I fail to see; he will have to return here, after an ordinary wedding-tour, to furnish a commonplace house at the 'Backs,' to eat his dinners in 'hall,' to lecture men in the mornings, and to do all the humdrum things

that every one else does, and all in the temper of the young god that drove the chariot of the sun. And to think that some day he may be feeding rabbits and canaries, like your father ! ”

“ Their minds are of a different order,” said Margaret, which was as near as her tender spirit could approach to a difference of opinion with her mother. “ I should imagine that my father was always a more practical man than Chevington, even in youth.”

“ You may safely assert, my dear, that your father never saw visions, nor dreamed dreams, and I can imagine your lover capable of both ; but, then, I never was one to idealize, and you are.”

“ Dear mother,” said Margaret, affectionately, “ I wish you had more daughters to care for you, when I have left you ; one is not nearly enough to fill your heart. You must adopt Ciceley and Helen.”

No, certainly Thomas Gruter had not idealized his wife; he had spent a good deal of assiduity in the courtship of his hens, because, unless bribed to remain with him, they might fly over the wall into his neighbour's garden; but the wife, once won, needed not to be tempted to remain. An Englishman's education does not accustom him to make company of his own wife, and when he is not making company he is apt to be terribly "at home." Accordingly Professor Gruter, at an early period, acquired academic habits of eccentricity of manner and slovenliness of dress; and for a quarter of a century, with unwashed hands, had disciplined the spirit of his wife into a brave, unremonstrant patience.

Then both mother and daughter fell to thinking silently of the future that was to complete their ideal of married happiness; Margaret had only to think of the morrow which was to convert her into

the bride instead of merely the betrothed of Applewood; her mother uttered her thoughts aloud when she said, with a burst of unusual confidence—

“I have learnt that all denials are but prophecies of future realizations, Margaret, and I wait for my golden wedding-day as you wait for the morrow. No!”—in answer to an unspoken question;—“not here. My golden wedding-day will be the day that your father and I meet on the other side of death, when I shall have dropped my idiosyncrasies, and your father will have left the rabbits behind, together with these bodies which have so long been a hindrance rather than a help to us both.”

Thus did the mother recognize the fact that her daughter had attained, where she herself had failed; and, motherlike, she took comfort, and humbly owned that it was best that daughters should use the experience of their mothers' lives as stepping-stones to rise

above them. For, indeed, it was no slight love which possessed the soul of Chevington Applewood for her who became his wife next day ; no facile attachment begotten by circumstances. Margaret and he were not of those who rashly snatch at illusory promises of happiness dictated by partial sympathies. Their highest possible perfection of being was consciously attained by each, under the influence of the other's presence ; and the reserve of this or that gift or capacity, for other occasions, was unknown by them. So perfect was the accord of these two rich natures, that there was no thought which might not be heard lest a dissonance should mar their finer harmony. Each day was to them but a new unfolding, a fresh revelation of the strength and concord and joy possible to them in union, but unrealized before ; so that all their past lives seemed to themselves to have been empty and meaningless, before

the breath of love transformed all mere potentialities into lovely and living entities. They went for a wedding-tour; but it was of no consequence to them whither they went. The world was but a footstool for their bliss; they read the riddle of the Universe in the light of their own happiness.

"Next year," he said to her one day, after their return to Cambridge, "we'll have a yacht, a cutter-yacht. I know where to pick one up, and we'll take half a dozen men of our college with us, and my two sisters, and a suitable crew, and you shall make your first ocean cruise, and see if you don't feel quite at home on the top of the water. I want to take the world into my confidence, especially the world of waters; and you shall learn, my queen, that, after all, you are a sailor's wife."

Then Margaret remembered her mother's words, that he would need more worlds to conquer; and felt that he longed to be

wrestling with the waves, as an outlet for his superabundant energies.

At the beginning of the long vacation, Randal Keltridge had wandered off to Norway, accompanied by three other incombinable men. He thus escaped meeting the Miss Applewoods as bridesmaids upon the steps of St. Mary's; and heard none of the college gossip about the wedding, for which relief he was deeply thankful. In the beginning of the October term, however, he was back in his rooms. By this time he had succeeded in again persuading himself that the end of man was to write a book, and his highest mission to be a critic. But in the twenty-fifth chapter of "The Methods of Modern Scientific Criticism, as applied to the Axioms of Ancient Philosophy," he was annoyingly interrupted by a note from Mrs. Gruter, inviting his presence at an evening party, in honour of the newly returned bride and

bridegroom. He grumbled and went, chiefly because he failed to see how to decline. A coolness had arisen between Chevington and himself, consequent upon the events of that day at the Manor-house. Ciceley had, indeed, given her brother an indignant version of the affair; and Chevington, well aware that his radiant sister deserved more of any man than a mere profession of readiness to become her husband, had resented Keltridge's conduct. So Mrs. Gruter thought the present opportunity a good one for bringing them together again peaceably.

As he approached the front-door steps Keltridge saw a small crowd of dark figures prostrate upon the stones, like worshippers engaged in some occult ceremonial; whilst the words "sand" and "shells," constantly repeated, suggested the pursuits of children on the shore. As he drew nearer, a person of the class known to him as "bed-maker's

helps," and commonly seen only at six o'clock in the morning, rose from her knees, and, regarding him in dismay, exclaimed—

"Blest if here ain't one on 'em, and this mess not half slopped up!"

But a "gyp"—his own, as it happened—recognized him, and stepped forward, with the complacent manner habitual to his order when hired out.

"Excuse me, Mr. Keltridge, sir. The steps will be ready in one minute. There has been a slight accident with a tradesman's boy and some oysters. The women will have the place straight directly."

The steps were but dimly lighted with a solitary gas-lamp; and Keltridge, with his bachelor instincts, always avoided association with street accidents or domestic catastrophes; so he turned away, merely asking, "Has any one else come?"

"No, sir; not yet, sir. I was just about opening the gates for the master's carriage,

sir; the master's never so very punctual, sir; and I fear the steps, being slippery, might be a little awkward, for you, in particular, sir."

Thus reproved by his man, Keltridge retraced his steps, returning only when the curfew sounded from St. Mary's; by which time Mrs. Gruter's rooms were full.

"Mr. Keltridge!" shouted the "gyp," and, dazzled by the lights, unable to distinguish one person from another, that gentleman hobbled into the large double drawing-room. Some one pushed him an armchair, right under a central chandelier; it vexed him; the position was untenable; and he considered the attention a reflection upon his lameness. When he was able to grasp his environment he saw the commanding figures of the bride and bridegroom, standing upon the hearthrug, before the early autumn fire; the light caught the folds of Mrs. Applewood's shimmering satin, and painted in

undulating waves of primitive colour the shining masses of material which lay around her upon the floor. Neither she nor Chevington seemed to have noticed his entrance; but Mrs. Gruter hospitably stood before him, and he now became aware that it was she who had bestowed upon him the obnoxious armchair; also, that she was calling his attention to the fact that her rooms contained armchairs of every imaginable slope and shape of back, so that luxurious M.A.'s might match their spines with her lounges. For the undergraduates, she assured him, she had likewise provided an excellent stock of music-stools, since the experience of a quarter of a century had taught her that, until gyrating slowly upon a revolving stool before the lady he might chance to address, no undergraduate was ever really happy in society.

This cheap chatter gave Keltridge time to discover that Helen Applewood stood

but three paces from him, listening to the account, given her by an undergraduate, of an entertainment at which he had lately assisted. It was, he declared, both cheap and popular, and not half so stiff as these indoor affairs ; they called it a “slugging-bee,” after the American fashion ; and they lit up their garden with Chinese lanterns, and put pails of salt and water all about ; the slugs provided themselves ; there were always plenty of those things in town gardens, and, of course, they were an awful nuisance, so it was useful, too. But you needn’t catch any, if you were a lady, and didn’t like manipulating slimy beasts ; you could scream if you choose, and it added to the fun. And of course the fellows smoked, and some of them carried lanterns, and the young ladies helped them, and altogether they had an agreeable time, and sauntered about together in the dusk under the trees ; and the men plunged the monsters

in the briny deep if they caught any ; and if not, they went in for refreshments, and, positively, it wasn't half a bad idea, and offered advantages all round. Keltridge listened in disgust, longing to dispossess the young fellow of Helen Applewood's society.

"I thought you had forgotten me," he said at last, when he managed to attract her attention.

"If I had, I should merely have had to ask about your book, to find out who you were," she answered brightly.

"My book?" he asked, with an uncomfortable memory of "The Methods of Criticism," still lying wet from his pen upon his desk in college.

"Yes ; as I am here to help Mrs. Gruter, she has been giving me advice, you know, and she recommends me, whenever I forget a man's name which I ought to know, to ask him, 'How is your book getting on ? And when are we to have the pleasure of

seeing it out ?' Every M.A. up here has a book coming out, you know, and as soon as it is published he is contemplating another ; and if you get at their subjects you are helped to their names."

"This is interesting," said Keltridge, "very ; but, may one ask, has Mrs. Gruter never been found out ?"

"Never. Once, indeed, a man replied to her, 'My book ?'"

"Well, I have a book on hand, it is true ; but I was not aware that any human being knew of its conception."

But the gratification caused by the discovery was evidently intense ; so, from having been upon the verge of a failure, she scored her most brilliant success.

"But, after all, you know, Mr. Keltridge, no one is surprised at any amount of interest apparently taken in them ; they always regard it as natural and right as well as pleasant and gratifying."

"I question," said Keltridge, "if you would find your rule work with undergraduates; if you asked them about their 'book,' they would take you to accuse them of betting."

"Oh, there are other rules for them," said the bride, coming up and joining in the conversation, "and it is even more important to remember their names, or to discover them if you have forgotten them; because, as a man once told my mother, 'The dons' wives forget us on purpose.' She pleaded in vain that there were so many of them, that they all looked alike in caps and gowns, and that she had seen many generations of them come and go; he merely went to the piano and sang with ironical intent—

'For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever, ever.'"

Everybody laughed, and the master's wife, joining in, entreated—

"Oh, do introduce me to an undergraduate,

please, Mrs. Applewood ; it is so many years since I've really known an undergraduate. I've long ago relinquished the attempt of rescuing one from the stream of circumstance which bears them all away. Are those really freshmen over there in the corner ? And does your mother positively know their names ? How very nice ! Now, do let me put them all down." And she brought out her tablets, and marked them all with double F's at starting ; "so that there might be no mistake about them."

Helen had chattered thus, and Margaret had helped her out, partly from a wish to ignore that former occasion so fresh in the minds of all three, when the absent Ciceley had wandered with them round the Manor-house garden. Also, so strangely mixed are all motives, it actually gave Helen a kind of security in Keltridge's company that she supposed him still to be cherishing Ciceley's image in his heart. He might

have been her brother-in-law; she imagined him still to desire that position. She was sorry that he had been so precipitate in addressing her sister who was so far above his reach, but she thought the better of him for his ambition; and both she and Margaret desired to heal any wounds which Ciceley's rejection, or Chevington's annoyance, might have inflicted upon his feelings.

But, as the bride turned away to circulate her smiles, a tremendous crash occurred, and one of the Heads of the University rolled at the feet of little Miss Silverhayes, and the group of freshmen whom shyness had led to share her modest corner. It was hard to provide thirteen solid armchairs in each of two drawing-rooms, and yet to be forced to apologize to a dignified and elderly personage who, by the deliberate choice of a little crosslegged Lilliputian seat, lay prostrate upon the floor, amidst the wrecks of a good cup and saucer.

Mrs. Gruter saw it was coming; but so nimble are the minds of middle-aged ladies compared with the rate of their bodily progress, that she was not able to avert the catastrophe; and Miss Silverhayes held out her trembling hand in vain. The freshmen were afraid to pick the master up again; for this, as for all other University proceedings, there must, they felt sure, be a precedent; but they did not know the University etiquette upon the point, and were not going to commit themselves; so, like other wise men, they decided that safety lay in inaction. Had the master felt the same, his position might have been improved; but, unfortunately, finding himself in the condition of a beetle reversed, he struggled violently and indignantly for restoration to a normal attitude.

Up rushed Mrs. Gruter, accompanied by her powerful son-in-law.

"Nothing but misfortunes this evening,"

she sighed to Miss Silverhayes, who, tearful and sympathetic, was calling and pleading for aid. "First it was the oysters, and now it is the master! Yes, did you not hear of it—five dozen? No one would believe me if I told it; but really there are some things I am not capable of inventing."

During the consequent confusion Keltridge vanished; and before the broken chair was carried out of the room he was halfway back to his book again, having said good-bye to no one but Helen. If ever he did enter a room full of people he always shuffled out of it in this shamefaced fashion, stumbling over ladies' dresses on his way to the door. There was such a delicious sense of freedom in getting into his old coat, and being back in his dingy rooms over his own fire. This might be said to be all the pleasure he gained by going into society at all, as a rule; but to-night, exasperating as was the memory of his

treatment by Ciceley, he did not regret that he had once more met Helen.

The following afternoon Keltridge called to leave his card, and, in the carriage drive in front, met Helen Applewood just starting for her brother's house at Newnham, so he turned and accompanied her in her walk. Beneath Ciceley's eye his nature had contracted with anxiety; but in Helen's society it dilated with hope. He no longer felt the necessity for constantly pointing out fresh objects of interest, in the absence of ideas which they were likely to entertain in common. With Helen he felt disposed to think aloud. As a result, he suddenly broke a brief silence, when they reached the quiet of the "Backs," beneath the dropping autumnal glory of the trees, by saying nervously—

"No doubt you are aware, Miss Applewood, of the blunder I was guilty of last spring in addressing myself to your sister?"

"You made no mistake in admiring my sister, Mr. Keltridge," Helen answered calmly.

"No; but I made a mistake in imagining that I understood her at all; she undeceived me," he added bitterly.

Helen was silent; she thought he desired to obtain her influence with Ciceley; and she was questioning within herself, how immediately to convince him of the futility of the notion, whilst wounding his evident self-love as little as possible.

They walked on a little way without speaking. Cambridge has nothing more beautiful to offer than the glory of these late autumn days, when, after the first frosts, the gales have sighed themselves away, and a silent stream of gold falls from the limes and elms upon the grass. The life of the year was ebbing, but the stream of human life flowing freshly into it, rendered the place astir with the new upspringing

of hope and ambition. Eager freshmen, as they passed, cast open glances of evident approval at the beautiful girl, and of mild criticism upon her companion.

Presently the silence became embarrassing, and Helen spoke.

"I am not surprised," she said, "at any admiration which my sister excites. She is very wonderful to me, although I am her sister, perhaps because I am her sister, and may therefore be supposed to know her best. She demands of herself, and of others, the most perfect form of expression which it lies in their power to give, either to their deeds or their thoughts. She would have life to be an art as well as a duty. I sometimes think she is like a rare flower, meant to add to the joy of all who see her growing above their heads; but never to be attainable by any."

The girl spoke with generous enthusiasm. Her words must be pleasing to this man

to hear ; so, at least, she thought, since they confirmed his own taste, and drew the sting from his personal rejection. Her surprise was great when he replied, in harsh metallic tones—

“ I do not intend to say anything in your sister’s dispraise if I hazard the observation that it strikes me that she agrees with you in your flattering estimate of her merits.”

It was outrageously rude, and he knew it ; but the wounded devil of self-love prompted the revenge. Helen glanced at him quickly, with heightening colour, then drew herself up and turned away. A group of light-hearted young fellows, passing at the moment, were entertaining themselves by assigning marks, after the fashion of their enemies the “ examiners,” to the ladies whom they met, for style of gait and carriage, and they immediately accorded her the highest marks attainable, upon the spot.

“ I will not trouble you to accompany

me further," she said; "and, as I leave to-morrow, we shall not be likely to meet again. I wish you good-bye."

So saying, she hurried on towards her brother's house, which was now in sight. Keltridge must have been obtuse indeed if he had not understood the finality in her tone. Yet, strange to say, so little did he know of family feeling, that he was surprised at having offended her. With more earnestness than perhaps he had ever shown before, he limped after her, remonstrating against her decision.

"I did not intend to detract from your praise of your sister, Miss Applewood. No doubt she is fitted by nature to dwell in some palace of art; and it is presumption of any one to think of dragging her down to share a march through the dusty street; but——"

But Helen had reached the door-steps, and declined absolutely to discuss the subject

further. She passed in, with a formal bow, and left him alone. Little did either of them guess under what circumstances they were to meet next.

Unlike Ciceley, Helen said not a word of her meeting with Keltridge to her brother or his wife. It so chanced that Chevington dined in hall that evening, and, in the all-embracing benevolence generated by his private happiness, he took the opportunity to renew his former friendly relations with Keltridge. He asked him to call upon his wife, in the new red-brick house at Newnham; and Keltridge went, but not until he had satisfied himself that Helen had returned to town.

During the next six months Applewood's energies became a proverb in the college, so inexhaustible were the forces awakened in his vigorous nature by the perfection of his lot. No subject worthy of notice came amiss to him. He took up the question

of "small holdings," and besieged every college meeting with representations as to the desirability of letting their land in parcels to peasant farmers. He went to the reformatory to rout out misunderstood lads for more hopeful careers in the training ships of the navy. He worked upon no fewer than six committees for the building of sanitary dwellings for the artisan, and for the appropriation of waste places. He sat upon the Drainage Commission. He belonged to the Public Baths' Company. He joined a Browning Club and a Swinburne Society. He again coached the college boat for the Lent Races and presided at smoking concerts; besides lecturing at Battersea Hall to working-men, he took Sunday walks with Barnwell boys, and played cricket with them on Saturdays on Parker's Piece. He became vice-president of the "Charity Organization Society," and a member of the council of the Society for "Psychical

Research." In the interests of this society he investigated mysterious phenomena, spent a good deal of valuable time in endeavouring to teach people to distinguish between their imaginations and their memories; and visited several haunted houses, where he never saw anything but what might be expected and explained with perfect ease; his eyes were closed save to the vision of the home that he hastened to return to, he was blinded by the sunshine of his own material bliss. But his pet scheme of all was a course of social evenings for the men of the fire brigade, and the formation of a corps of volunteer firemen from among junior members of the University. The ordinary routine of examination work was distasteful to him, and he never undertook it; giving frequent thanks for deliverance from the necessity of picking up pounds by work so uninteresting to him; but his lectures never suffered, and with his pupils he was more popular than ever. His

moments, as well as his energies, seemed to have been multiplied by the miraculous force of love. He spent hours by his wife's side, and even showed some sympathy in Professor Gruter's Aylesbury ducks, which were being reared for table in a sixty-gallon tank. Moreover, he found leisure to spend Sunday evenings, whenever Margaret was so disposed, in the peaceful society of Miss Silverhayes at the Manor-house. His robust and vigorous nature had sources of strength and joy unfathomed by the men and women about him, who had suffered their lives to become barren, monotonous, or dull. His vitality was astonishing; doubt and misgiving never seemed to touch him; and success rewarded his confidence by crowning all his endeavours. All the first winter after their marriage Applewood and his beautiful wife were familiar figures at college dinner-parties; and many a wearied man or disappointed woman was insensibly refreshed

by the proximity of two souls so full of blessing, that they spread their hands in loving welcomes to all around them. The love which they called theirs they held as a divine benediction ready to bathe the hearts of all. But these blissful moments drew to their completion.

One early morning in the end of May, Margaret awoke with the thrushes in the garden below, with the strange cry, "At last we are together!" upon her lips.

"Oh, my beloved! I am so sad, for the sake of a dream," she said. "Shall I tell you of it? Close as we are, I was so far from you in it. How separate we are, even at our best! Still I am I, and you are you, my husband; when shall our souls be one with each other?"

"My blessed damozel," he answered calling her by a name he often gave her, "I am content, and I pray you lay aside these fancies. Later in the year, when we

have that yacht I told you of, and sail away together for our second honeymoon, your dreams will no longer be of separation. All that I am, or ever have been; all that I do, all that I aim at, is yours, and for your sake. All that I believe in is hidden in the mystery of our love. How can I tell you what you are to me? Nearer to me than myself. Without you my life would be no life at all, but a poor problem to which I could find no answer. Why should I let you tell your dream? It is my joy to make your waking life so rich and full that your very waking in itself should cure your sadness, if indeed you could be sad, my wife, even in fancy, when I am by."

"But you were not by," she answered; "at least, not as you are by me now. Indeed, I must tell you what I saw; but bear with me, for the memory makes me shudder. There was a high building, and a great crowd below; but I was up above

in a thick cloud that shone with the light of flames, and I knew that it hid you from my sight. And in my heart I heard a voice saying, 'And all the night He led them with a light of fire.' And I held our child in my arms, and the light shone on its little face, and I loved it. Ah, you are a man; you cannot quite know how I loved it! But it was not enough for me to be a mother; I was yours, and you were hidden by those clouds of smoke."

There was a pause, and he felt her sobs. He took her head in his strong hands, drew it towards him, and kissed her hair; strengthening himself that he might strengthen her against these nervous fears which he had never seen in her before.

She took no notice, but continued, "Then it grew very dark, and it was very cold; but it was the devouring cold of a fierce, strong heat; and still I was alone. Then came a blank, a pause of seconds, or of

centuries, I know not which ; and when I looked again a change had come. I, the thinking I, was looking on, and I saw a steadfast, girlish figure standing in my place, as I had stood, and you were there, just below ; and I saw that you looked, not at me, but at what had been me and was me no longer ; and I called you, but you did not hear. Then that other turned to me, and said, ‘ I will bring him to you.’ And she smiled, and her smile filled my soul with peace ; and I asked her, ‘ Are you an angel ?’ But she gave me no answer, only clasped the babe closer to her breast and held out her hand to you, and you forced your way up through the flames to her embrace ; but your bodily arms were round me when I awoke weeping, and crying out, ‘ Are we at last together ?’ as you heard me. How long it takes to tell ! Speech is so slow, and thought so swift !”

Chevington was silent, seeing how she was shaken ; but his love had never seemed so potent to him as now, when it became her protection against her own weakness.

“ Ah,” she said, “ you are so sanguine, my beloved ! I have not the heart to disturb you with my fears.”

“ You cannot disturb me,” he said, with undiminished confidence. “ When you are weak is my time to be confident ; and, far from despising the oneness of our present state, I assert that it is through it that we reach the soul.”

“ But what if death parted us, Chevington ? ” she said, calmed now by the intensity of her feeling.

“ I refuse to see a prophecy in a dream, wherein I recognize only some confused memory, my darling.”

She became more and more calm, and a smile returned to her lovely eyes.

“ My strength is the strength of love,”

he said ; “and that is stronger than death itself.”

Never before had he felt so near to her noble spirit, to her deep, true heart. He went out that day to his numerous engagements stronger and more cheerful than ever, leaving Margaret restored to her usual serenity, and looking forward to a visit from Helen, who was coming down from town to stay with them. Helen had not been in Cambridge since the October term ; and Margaret was to meet her by the mid-day train, leaving Ciceley—who still avoided Cambridge as being the haunt of Randal Keltridge—to look after their aunt, Miss Stanhope, in her abode in Kensington, and to amuse herself as best she might whilst her aunt cherished her pug, and drove out shopping. But Helen was at the luncheon-table with Margaret when Chevington returned home in the middle of the day, and he hoped that his sister's

cheerful presence would serve to divert Margaret's mind from nervous and depressing thoughts during the many hours of his enforced absence. With the same idea in view, he remarked, before they quitted the table—

“Signor Saccharini, the big violinist, is going to give a recital at half-past four this afternoon in the Alderman's parlour, at the Guildhall; would you two care to go? I've heaps to do,” he added, “but I will make time to return and take you, if you like. If not, I shall not be back till after the dinner in hall.”

But both Margaret and Helen declined, declaring that they had so much to say to each other, and alleging their unwillingness to turn out again late in the afternoon, as the day, after beginning brightly, had now become extremely wet.



CHAPTER VI.

IN spite of the unfavourable weather, the large room, known as "The Alderman's parlour," was filled to overflowing when the hour came for the great Italian's musical performance. An eager audience awaited his appearance; for he was well known to them as a scientific master of sound, as well as a brilliant performer. Amongst the listeners was Randal Keltridge. Instrumental music was perhaps the one form of enjoyment, besides foreign travel, to which he was not insensible. Five o'clock teas with music, so called, lured him in vain from his shabby arm-chair. Young ladies' songs had no attrac-

tions for him. Promising "tenors," and astounding "altos," exerted their fascinations in the Guildhall in vain, he read their names on the advertisement sheets and passed on; but when some master of the violin or violoncello was to be heard in a grave chamber concert; or when a good military band played in the college grounds, there he was to be found, attentive but unscientific; a man to whom, for once, the stringed words spoke in tones which he understood and appreciated.

So he sat and listened this afternoon to the musical composer, abstracted, intent; whilst the room darkened, and the rain poured in torrents down the window-panes. This was no popular concert, but rather a service of sound. The audience was grave and sympathetic, and the musician—an ardent Catholic—freely interpreted to them the thoughts with which he was inspired. With consummate skill he main-

tained the ascendancy that his genius gave him, to lead them from concord to concord, until his mastery of their senses and of their hearts was complete; and they saw with his eyes the scenes that he saw, and heard with his ears the harmonies that he sought. Wondrous were the things which he translated for them whilst the spell lasted; but it rested with him to break it at a moment by a discord. With him they hoped and feared, enjoyed and suffered; with him they questioned, and then leapt for joy of the answer; with him they were swept by passion, or stirred by tender memories and moved by inarticulate hopes.

His power over the strings of his Stradivarius was but symbolical of his mastery over the heart-strings of the men and women who sat enthralled beneath him.

Presently he carried his English audience to the sunny land of the South, and read them the story of his distant youth. There,

in spite of their Puritan ancestry, and of their weighted lives, they joined with him in the festal dances of the people, and shared their unfettered glee. They caught the very accents of their mirth, heard the echo of their jokes, and vied with them in the hot love-chase.

Then the scene shifted; a change came over the master's vision, and his hearers shivered as the warning prelude fell in low sustained notes upon their ears.

In the race of youth, one sank with an agonized cry from his side, and was laid in the grass at his feet, and the Stradivarius wept—tears which were dropping touches of liquid harmony. But, tempted thus to a higher flight, the musician's soul clove its way to the skies.

Then began the swift ascension, the quest of the spirit of man, the theme of the old never-ending pursuit of its goal. Each ascent, made with pain, ending in hope,

continued in doubt and despair; renewed with fresh effort, baffled again; until at length—bent low with age—the musician awoke, prostrate upon the very floor of heaven. There he played to the good God, as the Padre had taught him when his boyish fingers first touched the strings in the musical mass, in melodious numbers, all he knew, and then waited—waited in a silence of adoration, for he knew not what. And his breathless audience waited too, in an expectation so tense, that it verged on pain; for what? Who might have guessed it? For no clear, great speech of mighty angels; for no immortal burst of heavenly anthem; but for a sportive rush of little rainbow-coloured comic things; half cupid and half cherub, babbling in innocent glee around the footstool, and upon the very knees of the Madonna herself. The air was filled with the ravishing notes of their infantine laughter, and the

people laughed with them. The consecration of childish fun was the simple lesson which this creative soul taught to his hearers ; but before it was grasped came a new movement, the strain of a rapture more intense. With an infinite pathos of musical sound, soul after soul, soaring upwards from the dim earth below, poised for a second—a lifetime—at the foot of the great throne, and each in its order—vocal at last—repeated the lesson of its life below, told all it had suffered in silence, all it had wondered in vain ; uttered all that, yearning in vain, it might never confess before. All the discords of vocal speech were melted into symphonies ; and the very shrieks of the souls in pain quivered into harmony upon the celestial air ; till the musician, released from his vision, broke the spell, and sank back to earth, an embarrassed and exhausted man. But none moved ; none applauded. The highest tribute to the master's power

lay in an audible silence which said, "For this it would ill become us to praise you; being who you are you have no need of us, nor of our poor praise. Shall the servants laud the seer?"

Not a tone, not a semi-tone was lost upon Randal Keltridge's ear. Here was a language which, if his dumb soul could not speak, it could at least comprehend. No doubt the subtler senses of the musician, aided by the sympathies of his audience, outran his slower interpretation; but a certain excitation of nerves, to which he was commonly a stranger, possessed him; and when he passed into the outer air the ordinarily weighted man was uplifted by a fine exaltation. It was a condition requiring action. He could not be content to return to his rooms. He turned through the gate of the college towards the river, rapidly passed over one of the bridges, and pursued his way beneath the trees at

the "backs." The day was declining early, and the rain continued to pour in torrents ; but in his ears the air was still vibrating with music, and shrouded faculties stirred within him.

To his amazement an unexpected figure approached him, flying rapidly along beneath the dripping trees. It was Helen Applewood. But, in spite of the torrents of rain, she wore only a light indoor dress, which looked strangely blackened and draggled, and a hat which had evidently been hastily caught up. Her bare hands, too, were extended before her, with a strangely unusual gesture. Her face was white with terror and distress. He stood still, a living mark of interrogation, and she dashed past him ; then, seeing that it was one known to her, she stopped, panting for breath, as one pursued by misfortune and half frantic with terror.

Addressing him by name, she bade him

“hurry for his life,” and “send some one else, some one who was not lame,” and “could run”—even in that supreme instant he winced at the plainness, dictated by agony—to “fetch her brother, and Mrs. Gruter,” for “a dreadful thing had happened—Margaret, Mrs. Applewood, was burnt, it might be to death.” Chevington was out, he had not been home since luncheon. He went out with his bicycle three or four hours ago, they did not know where he was. Only herself and two maids were at home. Would Keltridge find him at once, and send Mrs. Gruter?

“What shall I say?” asked the bewildered man.

“Say! Oh, what does it matter?” she answered impatiently. “Any of the things people say to those that are crushed by calamity. And a doctor—get us one of the hospital physicians, we’ve only the first we could find, some one’s assistant; and

especially Mrs. Gruter, and tell her—a nurse! Mind! Do it all, or get it done at once—immediately—for I can go no further; and I cannot leave her.”

So saying, she turned and ran back again; but, even as she turned, she glanced at his halting gait, and at his big stick, and sighed impatiently. The sigh said “Any one but you! Anything that had the powers of a man, rather than this miserable cripple.”

Never had the poor fellow cause to deplore his infirmity as he did on that painful return to the town. Being in the college grounds he was remote from any cab-stand. As it was so wet, he met no one whom he could send as a swifter messenger than himself.

When he got to the college Applewood was not within its walls; nor had the porter seen him that afternoon. Despatching messengers to seek him everywhere, he

himself took a cab to fetch Mrs. Gruter. He found her and her husband peacefully sitting together over the fire; Mrs. Gruter was knitting a quilt, and her husband sleeping over the *Spectator*. What a task was this which was imposed upon him! She stood up to receive him, awed into immediate silence by his aspect. Then nervous suffering seized him by the throat; he could not speak, he had not even removed his hat. Suddenly a grotesque memory of the comic fun, shown by the violinist, as an antistrophe to the tragedy of human life, overcame him, and the quivering muscles of his parched mouth relaxed into a wretched contortion of nervous laughter.

Now Mrs. Gruter thought she grasped the situation; he was subject to fits, and convulsions were upon him. She put her hand upon his shoulder, took off his hat for him, and with ready maternal kindness

tried to get him into a chair. But he pulled himself together, put her from him, and told his message somehow, in brief, spasmodic words. Her lined face blanched, but she said nothing. Her husband gasped, and his jaw dropped. Then, winding a shawl round her, and saying to her husband, "Come," she led the way to the cab. But as they passed the large cage of canaries in the lobby, Professor Gruter furtively threw a cover over it, as was his wont at this hour; then followed his wife, with his head bent down, and a broken attitude such as that with which a man might walk to his place of execution.

Keltridge hurried them both into the cab, and got up outside himself by the driver. When they reached the house at Newnham the husband and wife passed in, and would have taken no notice of Keltridge; but he stopped Mrs. Gruter to say, "Let me know if Applewood has come, and I will

go back and find another doctor and a nurse."

Learning that Applewood had not appeared, he got into the cab and drove miserably about, inquiring for him of everybody he knew, and calling at all likely places. He found him at last in the Trinity library, hunting up books. Instinctively Keltridge paused and cast a critical glance at him, before he struck the blow that was to blight his life for ever; as one might draw back to admire the magnificent proportions of some forest pride, doomed to the woodman's axe, before its glory was laid low upon the grass. Oh the pity of it! Must all the joy of possession come to this? Even the self-centred man was moved to pity the loss of a happiness of which he had grudged the gain. He marked the perfect nervous balance of the erect figure, the grand poise of the fine head, the dark piercing eyes undimmed by any past defeat of fortune.

The victorious bearing, always so remarkable in Chevington Applewood, was intensified now by the conscious security of present happiness. His whole attention was upon the book he was consulting. He had seen so little of Keltridge since his marriage that he was surprised at his approach; but when the cold, ungregarious man laid a compelling hand upon his arm, saying earnestly, "Applewood, come! Come at once!" the gesture and manner were more than sufficient to stab with alarm even this optimist nature.

"Yes; what is it? he asked, dropping his book. "College burnt down? Master dead?"

A corporate casualty crushes no one, as does a private calamity; but, as the cold torrent of nameless dread invaded the hitherto unshaken citadel of his heart, Applewood's outer man changed visibly.

"Come back to your home! I've a cab

at the gate. Some accident has happened to your wife. I met Miss Applewood hurrying for a doctor; she sends for you," Keltridge said.

"Cab, man; nonsense!" My machine!" Applewood exclaimed, and was off. Before Keltridge could hobble to the door he was already down the avenue and half-way over the bridge, scattering to right and left the astonished men who were making their way in to the first dinner in hall.

Then Keltridge, taking his way back to the cab, drove about in search of a doctor, and procured a hospital nurse, put her inside alone—he was far too shy to face her—and returned to Newnham beside the driver. In the brief transit his energy failed him. The necessity for further effort on his part was over, and a reaction set in. He grew angry. "When people were so perfectly fortunate in their circumstances why couldn't they take a little care to

preserve them? Why trifle with Fate in this preposterous manner? No one got burnt to death in the daytime without carelessness; and Mrs. Applewood, whom he had so lately seen as a calm and stately bride, might surely have guarded her rich lot in life better than to waste it by a sordid accident!" Yet a secondary current of thought suggested, "Perhaps, after all, it was her fate; no presentation of a new problem, but the reassertion of an old supremacy."

Then over his excited imagination swept the memory of those quivering harmonies, of those musical vibrations of spirits in pain, which had pierced his soul but an hour or two ago, at the touch of the musician's fingers upon the bow. Had the present agony of this soul too, struck upon the master's inner ear as it felt itself torn from love's embrace for an unwilling flight into the unknown?

No, Keltridge could not even now associate the image of Margaret Apple-

wood with the thought of souls in pain. He could not picture her to himself as otherwise than calmly and queenly acquiescent in death as in life. Randal Keltridge was not a religious man in any orthodox sense of the term. He had not learnt to give shape to his faith. His religion was without poetry or form; but he had recognized, in the region where men know but do not utter what they feel, in Margaret Applewood a soul, nothing doubting, nothing demanding, a soul in peace with all the world and with itself; a soul which had sunk to rest in a love that neither fire nor water could quench. But he did not state this to himself intelligently; he was stirred out of intellectual thinking into emotional feeling more than once during the hours of this brief wet day.

When they reached the house that Applewood had hitherto been so blessed in, two doctors' carriages, the bicycle, and another

cab stood before the door. It was open, and Keltridge and his companion passed in. They saw no one about ; it was evident that the whole household were upstairs. Not wishing to disturb any one, Keltridge waited for tidings ; but the nurse had no hesitation in announcing her arrival, with all the confidence characteristic of her class. She entered excitedly, with the alert and almost joyful air, common to these well-trained ministering angels when they enter our dwellings at crises. Pleasure at having got a new and exciting case lent decision to her manner and coloured her ruddy cheeks, and Keltridge shrank into himself as she summoned a servant, who came with her eyes red with crying.

“ Mrs. Applewood was actually dying,” she said ; “ the doctors could do no more for her.”

“ Poor young thing, it was awfully sad, and she not married a year ! Yes, she knew

her husband ; he had arrived in time. He was in there now. It was for Miss Applewood that the nurse would be wanted. She had done everything so long as she could ; but her hands were badly burnt, and she had fainted from the strain upon her nerves. Mrs. Gruter was with her ; and Professor Gruter was in the house too, with the doctors."

"I am the cook," she continued, "and I'm all alone down here ; and I feel so bad without a soul to speak to. It was the new parlour-maid that did it, so they say ; and I'm sure I'm as sorry for the poor girl as if it was myself. She has run away, nurse ; they don't none of them know it, but she is gone off home. She was scared out of her wits, like a crazy thing. Will they transport her, sir ?" she asked eagerly, turning to Keltridge, who was making for the door. "She didn't mean it. Will they try her at the inquest, and bring it in 'manslaughter?'

You're a college gentleman, so you ought to know."

Keltridge hastened to assure her that no one would have the wish, or the power, to punish her friend; but she scarcely paused to listen to him, so anxious was she to avoid solitude at this supreme moment.

"You see," she continued, "she was only used to gas, she had had nothing to do with these new-fashioned lamps where she came from, and Mrs. Applewood was showing her how to do them; and she was strange and nervous, and somehow she spilt the can of mineral oil all over Mrs. Applewood's beautiful dress; and then, they say, she must have dropped the lighted match upon it; but she didn't seem to know herself what she had done, nor how it happened at all. And if you'll step up, nurse, I'll tell you the rest on the way."

Keltridge hardly noted what the excited woman said, and as she disappeared with the

nurse, he left the house. He recalled now, the strange appearance of Helen Applewood's hands, as she held them outstretched before her, in her agonized flight, in search of help; and he wondered that it had not struck him before, that she herself was burnt also. And he drove away, greatly conscious of a personal share in that day's tragedy. Not for Olive Fayle's death had he ever felt this strange pang at his heart, which was caused by this later news.

His place in hall that evening was vacant. It was a sad meal at the high table, overshadowed by the tragedy which had wrecked the fabric of Applewood's married happiness. The younger men's mirth rang discordantly, and presently they too caught the infection of a sombre silence. There was no man in the college more beloved than Applewood; none whose misery would be more genuinely shared.

Keltridge's room was invaded, in the

course of the evening, by one or two, anxious to obtain fuller information ; but he had none to give. In fact, the rest of the college had picked up all the news almost as soon as he had learnt it himself. A college combination-room is never behindhand in securing news ; and before night it was known all over the University that the stately young matron, so lately admired at all the October dinner-parties, lay dying at Newnham, with her dead babe beside her, from the results of an accident with fire, caused by an awkward maid ; and that Helen Applewood, having been badly burnt in her efforts to aid her sister-in-law, lay between life and death, in the shock of exhaustion and fright.

So the night passed slowly, and another morning dawned, and they were again alone together, the young husband and wife, for a few brief moments, measured by the rapidly ebbing sands of Margaret's life. But four and twenty hours had passed since

they had spoken of love and death, whilst the thrushes sang in the garden below.

“Kiss me, mother,” Margaret had said, “and leave me now, and let me say good-bye to my father also. I would be alone with my husband when I die. Will you let it be so, mother?”

“I gave you to him,” the mother answered, as she turned away, conscious of the fathomless depths of renunciation which can be demanded of the maternal soul.

Chevington laid his head by hers upon the pillow. She was silent for awhile; then, opening her eyes, gathered up her failing strength to breathe in his ear the final utterances of her affection.

“Do not send me away to some far distant heaven, my heart’s love; think of me ever and always as present with you, here and now. I die; but my love remains. Where you love me I shall be. This life was too poor and small for our joys. Think

that I fold my spirit round you, and embrace you heart to heart, and soul to soul, and you will feel my presence when you cannot see my face."

She was silent again, and he lay motionless, noting her fluttering respirations with an agony of dread. Again she collected her powers to say, with intense earnestness—

"You must not remember me like this. Your inner eyes must see me in that other body, in which I shall wait for you, now that this poor one, in which you loved me so well, has become a thing you must strive not to be haunted by. Listen! Your imagination, your faith must keep me ever near you. In your thought, we must not only have a past, or even a future, but a present also."

Later on, he saw the shadow of some urgent grief overcloud her steadfast spirit, and the tears, which she could not wipe

away, flowed down her ruined face. She moved wearily, as though seeking something.

“Give me the little baby’s body; lay it in my arms,” she said. “Do not let them take it away from me when I am dead.”

Tenderly he did as she bade him, and folded her arms over the poor little form. But, even in death, the mother’s passion survived all other loss. She continued to weep.

“I wish I could have left it for you, alive, to comfort you some day,” she said. “But it seems to me now as though I have not possessed it at all, either to take or to leave, as though I had utterly lost it! Shall I find its little soul where I am going, since it lived only for me? It cannot surely be that it never was a living spirit; never had a soul for mine to recognize at all?” The agony of the thought convulsed her. “Even heaven itself would be a hell to me if I must yearn for it like this!” she cried.

Then, in a passionate longing to comfort

her, he arose, and, throwing himself upon his knees beside her, he prayed, in obedience to a primitive instinct, needing and demanding the feminine principle in a perfect deity, despite the special form of faith in which he had been reared.

“Mary, mother of Christ, satisfy the yearnings of this mother’s heart in the world to which she goes.”

Then for many minutes she lay quite still as though sleeping, and Chevington thought she had ceased to breathe, when, suddenly opening her eyes, she exclaimed, “See! do you not see that golden door? There! Touch it!” He thought she pointed to a bright shaft of sunlight, which ushered in the dawn of another day, whose further hours she might not see; but that it was not so was evident from her next words.

“No, no; not there—closer! See how bright it is; but it does not burn! It is soft and mild! It is a light which loves,

and smiles, and welcomes ! It is a living light ! Ah, can you not see it ? Touch it, my beloved, and then you will know—all that I know now.” Yet once more she spoke, and only once. Bending over her he caught the words, “ Kiss me,” and so she died.

Then, as he lifted up his head, a strange thing happened, and yet in that instant nothing was strange to him. A triumph, an exultation in the victory of immortality possessed him ! It was as though he too had crossed the threshold, and had gone on with her just one step beyond the confines of the world which she had quitted. In that instant he was as one to whom the stupendous secret was an open story. To him to whom alone the revelation that succeeded, was made, it was, in the supreme exaltation of the moment, as natural as love or birth, or any other factor in the sum of ordinary human experience. And

shall the records of such moments be judged by the standard of those who have never encountered them?

A few feet from the foot of the bed whereon she lay, with her lifeless babe in her arms, the environment of the room and its contents fell back; and the soft radiance of that heavenly "here and now," of which she spoke, shone through; and he knew that he too saw what she had seen. But in the centre of the radiant circle of light which "lived, and loved, and blessed," the life pulsed to a focus, and he knew that she was there. Not in outline, not as a figure; but where the light gathered to a halo, she was, and he knew it as he knew the fact of his own being, by a knowledge transcending proof. Impossible to move, to approach! He fell upon his knees, and the benediction of her presence rested on his spirit, as she passed from him, transfigured by the unconsuming fire of God.

Then he fell fainting, prostrate upon the ground, between the lifeless form upon the bed and the glorious appearance which represented her to him. Thus they found him.

When he recovered his senses they had carried him away and laid him in another room, and a doctor was in attendance upon him. But what he saw and learnt that hour, closed his lips for many a future day ; and “dumb with grief,” and “well-nigh bereft of his senses,” were the judgments pitifully passed upon him even by those who knew him best.





CHAPTER VII.

FROM the day on which he met her frantic appeal for help, Helen Applewood's memory completely possessed Keltridge's mind. The thought maturing slowly in his self-contained nature developed first into a suggestion, then into an intention. He would ask her to marry him whenever she recovered and he had an opportunity of meeting her again. Thus for a second time he found himself in the same position that he had been in previous to Olive Fayle's death; that of deliberately purposing to make an offer to a woman chiefly because circumstances had brought him into more intimate relations with her than with others.

When he called to inquire at the house at Newnham, he learnt that Helen Applewood had been removed to Mrs. Gruter's care, and that Ciceley had come to keep her brother's house. Once or twice he saw Ciceley, looking pretty and pale in her black dress as she tripped about the place; on these occasions he crossed the road to avoid bowing to her, and he punished the stones in the roadway, or kicked the legs of the chairs in his rooms, grinding out his human annoyance upon these inanimate scapegoats. For the memory of Ciceley's scorn stung, and his wounded self-love was unappeased.

Chevington Applewood lectured again in the October term; but the soul which had been so easy of access, had now become a sealed sepulchre. Observing his changed face, which had grown livid in complexion and lined with furrows, men, meeting him, suppressed themselves, got out of his way,

and felt uncomfortable. Only one, whose outer man had very faithfully represented his inner being could have suffered such an external metamorphosis. Applewood now very rarely spoke, he was well aware that anything which he might have to say, would but tend to confirm the general sympathetic impression that he had practically lost his senses at the time of the terrible shock which had befallen him—that he had, in fact, become partly delirious at the moment of his wife's death; he dropped all his pursuits and engagements, and lived apart in a condition which Mrs. Gruter recognized as little better than one of trance.

“He will come out of it suddenly, some day,” she said to her husband, “his nature is too vigorous and elastic for this state of things to endure. His faculties are but numbed, he is asleep and the sleep will revive him; but for us life is over.”

Ciceley walked out to the manor-house

one day in the week preceding Christmas, threw herself down in a chair, and forthwith astonished Miss Silverhayes by bursting into fits of hysteric weeping.

“What is the matter, Ciceley?” the fluttered little dame asked.

“Oh, oh, oh! I want to laugh!” the girl sobbed, rocking herself backwards and forwards. “For pity’s sake, Miss Silverhayes, help me to get away somewhere, where I may laugh; to meet some one who has some fun going. I shall go mad if this continues; Chevington’s a silent monument of grief, Professor Gruter’s brain is softening, Helen’s always ill and melancholy, Mrs. Gruter is no longer good company! I loved Margaret as well as possible, and I wouldn’t be unkind to her memory for worlds; but I am young, and all my life is being wasted; and, in short, I can’t stand it any longer. I nearly burst out laughing at breakfast this morning as I handed

Chevington his cup. It's awful; but it's true. I came here to laugh because I knew you would make allowances, and now I can't do it. I can only cry."

"Would it not be better to go back to town to your aunt's?" Miss Silverhayes asked.

"Why, the worst of it is there's not a laugh in the whole of that house either," the girl replied. "Aunt goes to bed at nine o'clock, and keeps a pug with a broken shoulder, and a very respectable maid with chronic jaundice; and she is 'so glad' to be 'quite quiet' when we go away. Imagine living till your one wish is to be 'quite quiet;' better choose yourself a coffin, and get into it at once!"

Before she had ceased speaking, or Miss Silverhayes had made up her mind how to reply, the heavy tapestry curtain which hung over the door was lifted, and a man entered whom Ciceley had never met before. It was

Miss Silverhayes's nephew, Unwin Silverhayes, M.D., and he had overheard the last sentence of Ciceley's passionate discourse. As a physician, he glanced at the young lady professionally and diagnosed "hysteric emotion ;" but, as a man, he noted the beauty of the face, and admired the perfectly proportioned outlines, and the warm, rich colouring.

"Now, what is it, I wonder?" he questioned. "An unappreciative family? Is she misunderstood? Has she a disallowed lover? Is it lack of praise, pence, or pity? She is in black, I see; but young ladies never lament legitimate family griefs in private interviews with their old lady friends."

"Aunt," he said, raising his voice, and startling Miss Silverhayes, who had not perceived his entrance, "I have to inform you that I've turned my back on duty; I'm sick of being consulted. I loathe the

examination-room. The world is worn as flat as an old threepenny-bit, it is not even tragic, it is simply dull. I'm going off to skate upon the fen. I hear it's flooded, and the folks are pouring out of Cambridge."

The little lady hastened to introduce him to Ciceley, adding proudly, "My nephew! He was telegraphed for from town to conduct a medical examination because another doctor failed, and he is going to stay over the 'old fellows' dinner.'"

"Only if the ice bears, and if you and Miss Applewood will come down to the fen and see the fun," said Unwin Silverhayes, with intent.

The moment that he heard her name he knew who the young lady was. Applewood and he were college contemporaries, and he understood the black dress, but scarcely the freshly shed tears. He was so very robust that Ciceley felt better at once; he was so

vigorous and good-looking, with sufficient conceit to inspire confidence, and sufficient ballast of sound sense to prevent his being mistaken for a prig. At once she realized, as he had foreseen that she would do, a companionship in the dulness of life which metamorphosed it into variety.

"I'll do better," he added; "you two ladies go on over the fields, and I'll run round by the vicarage and borrow a pair of skates for Miss Applewood, there are such heaps of girls there, they are sure to have some all right."

It was the first good time that Ciceley had had for a year, and she felt as though it was selfish to enjoy it so much, which fact lent zest to her pleasure. As to the man he thought less about it, being accustomed to take his overworking and his unbending as common alternatives.

When Miss Silverhayes went home to procure them luncheon, she believed her

absence to be long ; but they found it short. Active exercise and the stiring associations of skating would have been enough to restore Ciceley; but she and Dr. Silverhayes, as they glided over the ice in each other's company, with the wind in their faces, became further aware of keen perceptive and intuitive faculties possessed by them in common, and exercised with delight.

When Miss Silverhayes returned, she congratulated herself more than ever on the possession of such a paragon of a nephew, who by his mere presence had done more than all her wise advice could have accomplished, in cheering and invigorating her young friend. And she decided that she would send for Helen too, and see if she also might not be the better for Dr. Silverhayes's professional advice.

The frost continued, and Dr. Silverhayes remained for that special form of college festivity the "old fellows' dinner." Grey-

headed members of the college reappeared, bringing with them forgotten jokes, and a flavour of by-gone years ; and it was to be remarked that the more dignified their present position the more obtrusive was their anxiety to prove their intimate acquaintance with breaches of discipline—or even of the decalogue—in earlier years.

After dinner, when warmed by conversation, contiguity, and good cheer, they rose to utter their reminiscences, their anxiety to explain that they were not always good and grey was quite touching. There was a bishop labouring to convince the society that he had really been a very sad dog in his day ; a portly archdeacon who offered to convict himself of the crime of breaking his gates, by showing to all and sundry on the morrow, the strained iron railings through which he had forced his lithe body forty years before. Nobody believed him, for even the past generation, in coming up afresh, caught the

infection of modern scepticism ; but it was probably true for all that. To the Church succeeded the Bar. It, too, had its boasts.

One of Her Majesty's judges, who was present, modestly ventured to suggest that his were the hands which had one night anointed the statue of the founder with ruby-red ink. A crime which had created a grand stir at the time, and for which, like other crimes within his subsequent judicial experience, no culprit had been found.

Scepticism spread ; but jokes abounded, wine circulated, and conversion^{“u”} deepened from a buzz to a roar. Presently the bishop went for the Bar with a scriptural allusion to an “unjust judge.” It is surprising what a love of Biblical jokes the superior clergy of the English Church are apt to display ! And the Bar retaliated with a tale of a tutor blown up in his rooms by a son of the Church. The great surgeons followed suit ; but as the medical profession is allowed a pre-

scriptive right to run wild during the period assigned to its professional studies, the doctors found less credit in vieing with the Church and the Bar, in the narration of scrapes. Indeed, there was a sense that it was only out of manners, and not to seem to select themselves from the other professions, that a couple of eminent physicians protested that their behaviour had been no better than a bishop's or a judge's in their youth.

As a matter of fact, not a duller, quieter, more decorous set of young men could have been found, in their days, than these respectable members of the college ; but so great is the inborn admiration of the human animal for force, pluck, virility, that it cannot refrain from laying claim to brute powers, when confronted with his mates, however obviously it may have owed its success in life to conduct and intellectual force, rather than to sinews.

Unwin Silverhayes not being an old fellow, and not having as yet risen to a sufficiently prominent position in the medical world to afford to confess in public, sat taciturnly by the side of his neighbour Randal Keltridge. The men knew each other, being of about the same standing.

"Sad thing that of Applewood's wife. I suppose he's not here to-night. Miss Applewood is staying at Millmead manor-house with my aunt."

He meant Ciceley ; but Keltridge's thoughts immediately flew to Helen, and he determined to call on Miss Silverhayes next day. In his unreasonable private judgment he accused this confident doctor of a too ready professional eagerness to take his walks abroad among the tragedies of life. In spite of this judgment, however, Keltridge found himself, after the breakfast in the combination-room next morning again consorting with Unwin Silverhayes, with

a view to arranging a ride out to the manor-house. He had not seen Helen since she fled with outstretched hands, from him. Desire and dread both strove to govern his mind as he went.

In all ages misery has exalted its victims till they have assumed epic proportions, and Keltridge realized this fact in the attitude of his own mind towards this young girl who had traversed hours which comprised the history of a lifetime. This knowledge in the minds of those surrounding her might well compel her to translate an inner experience into a changed manner, which is the worst of being a heroine.

They left their horses at the gate ; the maid said her mistress was out, but the Miss Applewoods were in, and, without further ado, she ushered the gentlemen into the tapestried chamber.

The doctor walked first, nothing doubting, sure of a right to enter his own ancestral

house, and not afraid of any young lady whose experiences qualified her to be regarded in the light of a patient. Keltridge limped slowly and nervously after him.

Upon a cane lounge in the long window, lay the girl whose image as he had seen it last, had obliterated all others from Randal Keltridge's mind. All the alteration he had expected in details of dress, and of pallor were there; but in no better words could the man's ignorance have phrased the change that he observed, than by saying that Helen was "more herself than ever." Keltridge was far from comprehending the fact that the deepening curves of the lips, and the intensification of light in the eyes, were indicative of gain and not loss. No defeat of his in life had lent him any grasp upon the gifts whereby the spirit pays the body's debts; but he was aware that his dread of this meeting was immediately

vanquished, by the compelling desire to approach Helen again.

Keltridge pressed forward to greet her, and the doctor, noting that Ciceley was absent, and that both these people were evidently moved by an apparently uneventful encounter, hastened to inquire for her; learnt that she had gone down to the fen, and proposed to follow her, leaving Keltridge and Helen alone. Keltridge had felt nervous enough the moment beforehand; but now, as he took his seat by Helen's side, and observed that her helpless hands were still wrapped in silk mufflers, he became aware that they had been brought nearer together, by the tragedy which had marked their parting. Helen's sorrow was too deep, and her nature too true to allow her to derive any solace from dull inertia, or feeble depression of manner such as might appeal for pity, and rob her intercourse with others of its force and freedom. To lighten and

not to add to the common burden of life being her rendering of duty, she hastened to relieve Keltridge's embarrassment. But her present pathetic helplessness was in his eyes her greatest attraction. He understood weakness and infirmity, and he rapidly succumbed to the law of similar attraction. It was also a fact, though a strange one, that the every circumstance that he had sought to win another on the same spot, had its influence — through the law of association, in disposing Keltridge to a like train of thought. Passion, perhaps, accounts for but few marriages, and it may be scarcely safe to refer the approaches and affinities which lead to that state too readily to laws which govern or are defied by its impulses.

Keltridge pitied this girl, longed to take care of her, regarded her personally with entire approval ; to give a warmer name to his sentiments even now would have been to

exaggerate them. He desired her companionship for life, or, at any rate, for as much of it as was worth taking into account at all. He had been brought into unusual relations with her. He imagined her nature suited for the completion of his own decidedly unsatisfactory existence ; but he was positively as far from comprehending her aims, motives, thoughts, ideals, as he was from sharing the passion of the more ardent lover. He was quite prepared to give Helen Applewood the best that now or afterwards he might have to give ; but the best that a just and upright man may have to offer may be an utterly joyless, though it may not be an absolutely valueless gift. He leant over her and stammered earnest words of interest and sympathy. He told her how much he had grieved for her sorrow and pain, alluded to his poor efforts to help her, even apologized for the offence he had given and which had been evidently erased

from her mind by the larger writing of subsequent events; and with it all chafed at his physical slowness, which alone seemed to build barriers, where she had raised none.

Helen accepted all that he said as the symbol of feeling beneath, as deep as her own would have been had their relative positions been reversed; and was sympathetically influenced by him.

Both were startled when Miss Silverhayes and her nephew appeared, followed by Ciceley and Chevington himself. Keltridge had never found himself in presence of the latter, since the day when, as a matter of courtesy he, with the rest of the fellows, had attended his wife's funeral. Now Applewood took but little notice of the rest, and, with a dejected mien, sank into a chair by Miss Silverhayes's side, with his back to the light; but the change in his air and manner was terribly apparent,

and he walked like a man going to be hung. Soon his mournful silence made the air of the room choking, and, in a few seconds, would have strangled the efforts of the others to converse. A ray of pale wintry sunlight penetrated the gloomy atmosphere of the room; Ciceley felt surrounded by all the vanquished forms of bygone years; the very dust that streamed in the sunlight, seemed to her to taste of death; she shivered and turned instinctively towards Miss Silverhayes's nephew, who seemed to be case-hardened against emotional impressions. And soon the provocative, mutual conflict of admiration, between these two untried beings strove with the gloomy atmosphere introduced by Chevington, and dominated the subdued intercourse of Keltridge and Helen.

To Ciceley's imaginative nature, Margaret's death had appealed mainly by its dramatic effect. It had not permanently

affected her life as part of her personal experience. It more than once jarred upon Helen's ear to hear her describe it. When Ciceley talked thus to some sympathetic acquaintance, Helen turned paler than ever, and said, "Ah, you were not there!" Beneath which utterance lay a host of grim materialistic memories.

Helen's acceptance of the reality was accompanied by the rejection of such artistic disguises as those by which Ciceley cheated herself of any real conception of the tragic nature of the event. But there were in her faithful disposition roots of hope and courage which did but strike the deeper for endurance.

Keltridge and Ciceley mutually acknowledged their previous acquaintance by the most distant bow; then she gladly passed out into the garden with Unwin Silverhayes, thus to escape at once the depression of the moral atmosphere and the restraint

of Keltridge's presence ; and, in her healthy reaction against misery, she cleverly caught and returned all the doctor's balls in a game of conversational tennis, as diverting to himself as to her.

Now, Ciceley, like many other girls with a discarded lover, imagined that the man who had asked her to marry him must necessarily be in love with her still ; whereas he had never been in love with her at all. She could, however, scarcely be expected to understand how he should now have approached that state more nearly with her pale sister, by whose couch he sat still, writing rapidly, with a pencil and paper, whilst Helen looked over and read what he wrote. Ciceley, having led the doctor into the greenhouse in search of a few wintry blooms, paused when she reached the well-remembered spot where she had listened to Keltridge's ill-chosen words a year and a half before. And

whilst she stood in all her radiant beauty, leaning against the old glasshouse, she held her companion captive by the witchery of her laughing brightness. At that instant Keltridge looked up too, and saw the picture through the closed windows. The outlines were the same as one he remembered, but the scene was changed from summer to winter, and another man, too, stood in his place, who gave Ciceley back the smiles she had never showered on him. At the sight an impulse seized him. He had been going to copy for Helen from memory, a passage which—in his thirst to interest her in himself—he had chosen to illustrate some experience of his own; but the pencil deviated almost, so it seemed to him, of its own will; and he wrote instead, the well-known lines from Browning's "Two in the Campagna,"

"I would that you were all to me,
You are just so much, no more ;"

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“I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul’s springs, your part my part
In life for good or ill.”

Then he pointed to them with insistence which made them his own expression, looking earnestly in her face, where a deepening tinge of colour shone. He was afraid to speak, lest he should attract the attention of Chevington and Miss Silverhayes; but they were sitting by the fire at the other end of the room, and did not appear to have any thoughts to spare, being too deeply engaged in a long, low conversation. Miss Silverhayes, bending forward over her work, regarded her old pupil wistfully, with a tender look which was in itself, a maternal embrace; and Chevington never raised his voice, but spoke in a subdued, monotonous manner. Moreover, the screen round Helen’s couch served Keltridge’s design. Helen’s hands were

still almost useless; she could not crush the paper, nor remove the words he had written; there they lay beneath her down-cast eyes, giving more forcible shape to this new thing between them, than if in words it had merely been confided to the air. Thus he awaited some kind of response.

"Helen," he murmured, "the poet speaks for me, better than I could speak for myself. His words convey my longing. I have much to say; but it cannot be said here."

"Do not try to say it now, it is too soon," she answered doubtfully.

"It is not 'too soon' for devotion, for care, for consolation," he breathed. "You appealed to me once, let me serve you again, for the rest of our lives."

She looked distressed, and as though she desired to escape.

"Ah," he said, "I ought not to have reminded you! Forgive me! But I would give my life to that same care of you."

Pity for Helen's disabled state moved him to genuine feeling as he spoke. Hitherto, he had always thought of marriage as the devotion of some woman to himself; otherwise as a ridiculous mistake; and possibly nothing but the rude physical lesson of those burnt hands, lying helplessly before him, would have developed any different emotion in him.

"Let me be your friend, your most faithful friend, some day to be your husband, Helen!"

He wrote this, for Chevington had turned towards them in a pause of conversation with Miss Silverhayes, then added, with rapid eagerness—

"My life has been all suffering. I have always been alone. Always unlike others. I admire you, and long to cherish you. You will help me. Let us meet the rest of life together."

His look was one of earnest entreaty;

but she raised her eyes and they fell upon the happy faces down the garden. Her thoughts went back to that conversation there, when three girls had stood together, and had planned their future lives. Then it had been Ciceley he had sought. Well, it did not hurt her generous nature that she should not be the first; yet, was this the life she had said that she would choose?

But Keltridge's eyes, following the direction of hers, suggested to him too the memory that he had formerly occupied the place of the man now standing by Ciceley's side, and he chafed inwardly. How explain to her that in temperaments like his, passion counted for nothing; and that a man, so unmoved, might turn, not from one maiden to another, but from one mind to another for sympathy, just as a man might delight himself in the society of one friend after another.

“Love differs,” he wrote, and then hesitated. How could he say, “It is not always the passion of possession, though it is misrepresented thus in books and dramas?” But there was no need for him to seek to explain. She signified by a turn of her head that she understood.

“That was not what I was thinking of,” she said. “Perhaps it is true that every new love enriches the nature, if it is real.”

And whilst he waited for her to say more, seeing that she was considering how to express her doubts, Miss Silverhayes’s attention was again attracted towards them by Chevington’s getting up and looking round for Ciceley who was just re-entering the house, followed by Unwin Silverhayes; observing this, Randal Keltridge quickly possessed himself of the paper upon which he had been writing.

Helen coloured, lifting her eyes for an

instant to his face, and he had to turn to Miss Silverhayes, whilst Chevington approached his sister.

"You are looking better," he said, noticing the flush upon Helen's cheek, and being still too preoccupied to see any further. "Miss Silverhayes has worked wonders already by her care."

"Miss Silverhayes is good enough to heal anybody," Helen answered, throwing back her head for the little old lady's kiss, a proceeding which caused not the slightest embarrassment to Keltridge or herself, but which Ciceley, coming in at that moment by the long window, followed by Unwin Silverhayes, distinctly objected to. She coloured hotly, and thought with annoyance, "I do wish old ladies, even the sweetest, would not kiss their girl friends before their nephews! It is ignorance, if it is not bad form." Then she lifted her eyes, and turned her back upon the doctor to hide the

thought, which shows that, as Keltridge wrote, "love differs."

So it came to pass that Ciceley attracted a new lover, Chevington mourned a lost bride, and Keltridge and Helen reached the supreme moment of the surrender of their lives into each other's power, all at one and the selfsame time; yet all playing their parts in eternal isolation, after the old undramatic fashion of actual experience.

As they rode back to Cambridge the doctor remarked—

"Pity those girls have only got a couple of hundred a year apiece. I suppose Miss Ciceley will make her home with her brother till he marries again."

"Really it has not occurred to me to consider the Miss Applewoods' financial position," said Keltridge, stiffly.

"My aunt babbles about her acquaintances," remarked the doctor.

Then it happened to Keltridge to wish,

much as Ciceley had done a few minutes before, that excellent and confiding old ladies would not discuss their girl friends with their nephews; and for the rest of the ride he out-did himself in surliness and taciturnity.

That evening Randal Keltridge wrote to Helen. It was a strange letter. There was no yearning in it; nothing tender, nothing of the lover's unsatisfied longing. It might have been written by an undemonstrative husband of thirty years' standing to the wife to whom he had nothing left to say. He wrote not only as though she were his own already, but as though she had long been so. The sense of possession displayed in that strange letter was deep and strong; but it was icy-cold.

Helen read it as she lay on her sofa in the early morning of another wintry day, and, in spite of the warm firelight, she shivered as she read. It puzzled her, and she let it fall in her lap, whilst she thought out the

question suggested by it. What did it mean? The bond which it riveted was one which brought her no lightness of heart; she felt rather repelled by it, and yet she had so great a tenderness and pity for this man, that she had persuaded herself that it was love, and that the duty of her life lay in the direction of his needs and desires.

She picked the letter up and read it again, seeking to do Randal Keltridge full justice, and to take to herself the blame, if blame was to be found, in her frightened attitude. Thus interpreting, she saw the truthfulness of the letter, and the integrity of the man who had written it; and she bade herself prize these gifts at their actual worth. She perceived the rigid uprightness of nature, which could not conceive that another should interpret less strictly than he himself, the words which he had written or spoken; and she accused herself of pettiness in desiring something more attractive in language and

sentiment. How foolish to hanker after raptures easily put on by the shallow and insincere! This was genuine. This would last. Here was a rock of strength on which a woman might lean for a lifetime. So she tried to persuade herself. And yet it was not a love-letter, and she was only a girl of twenty, however mature in experience, and she would have liked a lover whose speech should have been as music in her ears. Neither was she so inexperienced that she had not had the opportunity of drawing comparisons between Randal Keltridge and others in the same relation.

Helen could never remember the day, since as a little girl seven years old she had quarrelled with her first boy-lover, for crawling under the dining-room table, when he gave her rides on his back, thereby endangering her head, when she had not had some devotion laid at her feet. From the boy-pony she had passed to the big school-

boy who pursued her with pathetically earnest entreaties to "wait" for him until he had taken a double-first degree at college, had made a big fortune, and had come in for a title and estates, all in the briefest possible space of time. Memory also suggested the young fellow whose father had objected to his marrying a comparatively poor girl, and who had gone to India and died there. His pink, scented letter, when he got his appointment, still lay in her drawer. None of these had struck her seriously, and yet she knew that these would have written love-letters such as Randal Keltridge's was not. And yet she thought that she had made up her mind to marry him. She laid the letter aside, determined to be observant and guarded in manner, and to study even more carefully than before, the writer's nature.

But by the next post Keltridge sent her a handsomely bound copy of Browning's poems, with the marker inserted at the

passage he had quoted. This reassured her. So he did feel that the poetry was lacking, and would fain supply it. Those volumes of poems were a great comfort to Helen. She argued Keltridge's superiority from his gift. He could not condescend to the production of sentimental raptures, yet the spirit of the poet was in his love; and he sought to ally it to all that he felt most true in expression, and exalted in sentiment.

Miss Silverhayes was darting about when the book arrived, snipping dead leaves from the trelliswork covering the drawing-room windows. Intimate association with this innocent and transparent nature was so tempting to Helen that, when a bunch of Christmas roses was laid in her lap, she caught the hand of the giver, and said, smiling—

“Tell me, auntie, who gathered roses with you when you were young? Tell me their names, who were they, and what became of them?”

“ ‘ Them !’ ‘ They !’ ” exclaimed the little lady, blushing a pale, pearly pink, like a flower. “ There never was but one, my dear, and he didn’t last long. Nothing ever came of him. Perhaps it was best so.”

“ And who was he, auntie ? ”

“ My dear, he was a curate, and he married some one else. She was the daughter of the patron of the living that he afterwards got. Her father gave it him, you see, and so I think he felt she was his duty; and I was—— ”

“ And you were only his love ? Well, go on, auntie.”

“ There is no more to tell, my dear ; it was a very tame affair. He used to walk home with us on Sunday evenings, and sit on that old bench there, with my father and me ; but one day he got a better curacy, and he went away. He told me he would never forget me, and he slipped a letter in my Prayer-book ; but he married her, and that was all about it.”

“And were you not angry, auntie?”

“No, I was not angry, I was unhappy; but it seemed so natural I could not blame him much. I dare say if I had been a greater sort of person I should have felt it right to be very angry; but, as it was, somehow it did not strike me in that light.”

“And have you seen him since?”

“Oh yes, I have seen him several times when he has been in Cambridge. He is a very magisterial person now, and his wife is very dignified and stout. They have got thirteen sons and daughters, and grandchildren besides. He does not even know me by sight; and he has never been out here since the day he went away; but I should not care to be introduced to him again.”

So even the meekest of women drew the line somewhere, Helen observed.

“And your letter—what did you do with that?”

“Well, my dear, I don’t mind confessing that I kept it. In fact, I have got it still—just as you will keep that love-letter that you received this morning.”

Helen felt quite guilty in sanctioning Miss Silverhayes’s description of Keltridge’s severely contained epistle; but she had observed that truth is conditioned as much by the capacity of those who hear as by the conception of the speaker, and she was forced to acquiesce. Miss Silverhayes could never have been made to understand Keltridge’s character; nor could she in the least have entered into the peculiarities of their relationship to each other.

“I’ll show it to you, my dear, if you like. I’ve never shown it to anybody else; but now you will be interested.”

So Miss Silverhayes returned with a folded, faded letter, that had been kept in the same drawer for fifty years; and Helen read a simple, commonplace effusion,

in which the ancient curate mingled his love, his religion, himself, and the pretty Sunday-school teacher ; but she saw that, however false he might have proved afterwards, when actuated by worldly motives, the young man had at least started with the recognition that the love of truth, and the love of the guileless soul that attracted him, were essentially one.

“ How he must have suffered when he renounced his ideal for a vicarage and an income ! ” she said to herself, as she gave back the letter.


The next thought was a doubt how such a completed dream might have lasted ; would it have withstood the radical tendency—which she thought she had noted—in all men’s natures toward rigidity in manhood and impenetrability in age ? The final outcome of thought suggested by the faded letter was one that Miss Silverhayes could little have guessed. Would a union built as

Keltridge proposed to build theirs, upon negations of belief, expressed in phrases of modern coinage, prove any more likely to go wrong, than one of these old-fashioned marriages, built upon the expressions of unquestioning faith by an absolutely untried man? The simple confidence of those two old lovers was as little possible to Helen as it was to Keltridge. The loyalty to love as oneness with the very soul of truth, was even more hers than it had been theirs; for theirs had been the unconscious belief of the child; hers the same faith when it has stood the test of a conscious awakening.





CHAPTER VIII.

“ F course you do not care for rings. Helen?” Keltridge asked, one day, soon after their engagement became a settled fact.

“Rings!” she said brightly, holding up her gloved hands. “I used to love them well enough; but I cannot wear them now.”

Keltridge looked embarrassed. “Ah,” he said, “in that case I meant that I should think something less conspicuous, less like an advertisement, would be more to your taste.”

“I do not understand you, Randal; I do not think that I have any reason for minding everybody’s knowing that I am engaged to you, in our small world.”

"No, of course not ; but, the matter being settled otherwise, I shall get something else, something less noticeable."

"But I hope I shall be able by June to wear one ring, at any rate, Randal. Think how awkward it would be if I could not ; you would have to give it me to keep, and pretend to put it on."

Keltridge got up and went to the window in a nervous, restless way that had grown upon him of late. It was evident that the prospect gave him no encouragement ; he was looking wretchedly worn and shrunk, and his lameness was more apparent than ever.

Helen, on the contrary, had improved in looks and health ; but her increased animation alternated with anxious looks at the pale figure before her. Her eyes, not her lips, seemed perpetually questioning him. Since her engagement she had continued to reside with Miss Silverhayes :

and a long frost of six weeks' duration had frozen the whole fen country, which lay in the immediate neighbourhood of the Manor-house.

Hundreds of skaters streamed out from Cambridge daily, to dart backwards and forwards over the crystal pathways of the frozen land. Ciceley spent brief days of happy excitement, attended by one and another of the crowd of eager undergraduates. She showed her sparkling countenance at the windows only when lured in by sheer hunger ; fatigue she never owned to ; and the doctor, Unwin Silverhayes, had found it more than usually possible to absent himself from his professional work, and to accompany her in mazy excursions upon the ice. In this way she supported the dulness of life in her brother's house.

Helen had recovered sufficiently to move briskly about the garden and village ; but

she still shrank from entering the town. It had been decided that she and Keltridge should be married in June, in the little village church by the Manor-house.

“And you will have no one there, Helen?” Keltridge asked anxiously. “No one but Miss Silverhayes and Ciceley, and Professor and Mrs. Gruter, if they wish to come? Your brother, of course, would not feel up to it; it would be too painful. And I shall get Dr. Terence Garfoyle to perform the ceremony. It had better be at nine o’clock in the morning, I should say. It’s a pity it can’t be at the registrar’s office. I hope it will be a wet day, so as to avoid a fuss and crowd.’

When Helen had listened in patience to this style of remark made for the twentieth time, she one day replied—

“You are dreadfully afraid of having any one see me, Randal. I am not likely to want to have a lot of people there any

more than you are ; but you really need not be so anxious to convince me that I am not worth making a fuss about."

She spoke lightly ; but there was an undertone of bitter meaning in the words. He felt it, and it angered him. Criticism was his chosen weapon, and he did not like this infringement upon his prescriptive right.

"Oh, well, if you say that, of course I am dumb!" he retorted. "Pray invite the whole University, if you choose. I should have thought that I was consulting your own taste in what I remarked. However, pray do as you please. I shall not offer another suggestion in the matter."

"Why, Randal!" she said, preserving her equanimity of temper. "We are not near enough to quarrel yet; we must wait for that until we have been married a year. But, seriously, I understand perfectly what you wish; I should be very foolish if I resented

it. It is only your way of imagining that I need to have it impressed upon me over and over again that vexes me. Come, now, let us drop the subject."

So Keltridge consented to be propitiated ; but Helen noticed, with pain, that he never alluded to their wedding-day again, until really forced to do so, months later, by a question asked by Mrs. Gruter.

"Did they intend to be married by banns or by license?"

"Oh, by license, of course," he said eagerly. "I am sure Helen would not wish for the wretched publicity of banns."

This conversation took place in the Manor-house drawing-room, in the following May. Mrs. Gruter had driven over, Ciceley and Chevington were both present, and the silence which followed Keltridge's remark was painfully felt by all. Ciceley hated and despised him worse than ever. Chevington, who had himself been such a triumphant

lover, was aroused by it from his constant abstraction, and suddenly cast a scrutinizing glance upon his proposed brother-in-law. Helen was wretchedly aware how unfortunately the man she was engaged to was impressing the rest of the company. To read their adverse judgment of him, to see that he brought their disapproval upon himself, and yet to feel that he was not what they evidently thought him, was a species of torture to her.

Mrs. Gruter, aided by a matured habit of controlling situations, spoke first.

"You should leave Helen to say those little things for herself, Mr. Keltridge, though no doubt we all appreciate your desire to spare her."

This rebuke annoyed him ; he sprang up, and took his leave abruptly, as though he had been a mere caller, who felt himself superfluous in the family circle. The more, in fact, that Keltridge saw of Mrs. Gruter,

the less he determined to see, when he had a house of his own. She possessed a power of making her opinions felt, which did not please him. He knew that she sought to mould his words and ways—and those of other men also—after some ideal of her own, and he was not grateful to her for the covert criticism, which the benevolent effort concealed.

As soon as he had departed, Helen and Ciceley took themselves off into the garden, leaving Chevington with the two ladies.

“What on earth is the matter with that most objectionable man?” exclaimed Mrs. Gruter. “He grows worse daily! He is for all the world like a hedgehog, literally wrapped up in himself, and a mass of spikes outside. He is not fairly tolerable! Chevington, do you not see it?”

“He always was a queer, solitary fellow,” said Chevington, mournfully. “I should certainly never have recommended him to

Helen ; but in these matters girls are supposed to know their own business best ; and there is nothing definite to be said against him. He has a certain position, plenty of means, and an unblemished reputation."

" But do you suppose he wants to be off it ? I can't help hoping he does. Helen is a thousand times too good for him, always was, and always will be. Is he always like this when he is here ? Miss Silverhayes, what do you say ? "

" I really cannot tell you, Mrs. Gruter. I always leave them to themselves. I rarely even see him when he calls. Helen always seems the better for his visits, in my judgment," said the little lady, carefully.

" Perhaps, if Helen's going to take him, it's as well she should see the worst of him," observed Chevington, with the apathy of manner out of which even his sister's prospects had now no power to rouse him.

The risks of happiness were so great in all cases. Life held such hideous mischances in store, even when all promised most fair. So coldly reasoned the once frank optimist.

In despair, Mrs. Gruter again appealed to Miss Silverhayes.

“Could you not talk to Helen about him? She loves you. You are so gentle and wise. It really is very serious. The time is so near—only three weeks off, I believe. Could you not open her eyes? When first she came here she came as my guest; but she is now far more your property than mine. You would have more influence with her. Better anything than let her marry a man who certainly does not care for her as he ought.”

“I scarcely see it as you do, I fancy, Mrs. Gruter. Mr. Keltridge seems to me a person of very retiring disposition, but very steadfast and dependable, I should say.”

“Let him retire, then; it’s all that we want of him. Only let him do it alone, he is such a cold-blooded wretch,” said the more emphatic lady; “the poor girl will be miserable with him. He doesn’t value her a bit as he ought. I wonder she does not see it herself. I must speak to her, and to-day too, if neither of you can. These two girls are like daughters to me, for my own daughter’s sake. I have nothing so near to me now. Yes, you must forgive me, Chevington. You know what it costs me to allude to our darling; but here is Helen, who risked her life to save her—Helen, that any man might be proud to win, and the creature behaves as though he were ashamed of her! It’s more than I can stand! Chevington, could you not rouse yourself for your sister’s sake? I know what an effort it would be.”

Chevington sighed.—“Impossible to interfere,” he muttered.

Men are not so fond of meddling either in the making or marring of marriages, was what he would have told her.

“But, dear Mrs. Gruter, do let me warn you that I do not believe Helen needs any one to show her anything about Mr. Keltridge,” pleaded Miss Silverhayes. “I think she knows him far better than any of us can, just because she cares most for him. I remember how, one evening here, my nephew Unwin carelessly repeated the old statement, that love is blind; and Helen answered him so quickly, that, ‘on the contrary,’ love was ‘the only thing that saw.’ And I have sometimes thought,” she added, “if you will forgive a very homely illustration, that Helen views him in the light in which my children used to view the stones and chestnuts that they brought me fresh from the path by the river, where the sunlight and the water shone on them and glorified them; and we see him

as I used to see the same objects when I threw them away a week after, when they had lain in the dust in my drawer—and possibly,” she added, dropping her voice and speaking with emotion, “only those who see us in that light of love know anything about us at all.”

“Oh, of course,” said Mrs. Gruter, decisively; “that is all very well; but we are not now talking of seeing things in eternal relations, but under finite conditions. The consideration that his wings may be sprouting, does not go far to reconcile me, when I have to talk to a prig in a parlour. You are too transcendental, my dear friend. Marriage is, after all, a very mundane matter, I assure you.”

At this, Miss Silverhayes blushed like a girl, and looked rebuked, and Chevington got up, walked to the window, and turned his back upon his mother-in-law.

“I never did like the man—I mean Mr.

Keltridge," pursued Mrs. Gruter, undeterred by these signs of disapproval. "He always was full of himself; and how you can call him 'dependable' when he has turned from one girl to another in the way that he has, I don't see."

"He has quite made up his mind now to marry our dear Helen, and she is equally ready to take him, I think," said Miss Silverhayes, recovering herself. "Helen never seems to waver in her intention, and I am sure she cannot fail to improve him greatly. Depend upon it, dear Mrs. Gruter, he will become quite another man when he has got her. He has had so few advantages; no home, no parents. When he has got a sweet wife, like Helen, he will become much happier and better. Besides, the time is so near now, and I am sure they have never had the least difference, or disagreement of any kind; and all the while that they have been

engaged, he has come here so regularly, three times a week, never failing, whatever the weather might be."

"Yes, and never coming once too often, or staying five minutes too long! Such a nice exemplary man!" ejaculated Mrs. Gruter. "And as for quarrelling, why, he has never had a chance, any more than Professor Gruter has had. Helen takes the greatest possible care not to make him angry, I can see; and she gives in to him as if she had been drilled into it for a quarter of a century! Where are they going for their wedding-tour? Have you heard, Miss Silverhayes? I asked him one day last week, and he scowled at me as though I were an impertinent old hag, and told me he'd no definite intention of taking a holiday at all."

"I believe they are going into North Wales."

"He has got a notice up on the college

screens that he will read with Honour men in the Long," said Chevington.

"What next?" said Mrs. Gruter.

"And why not? I really do not see any harm in that. Four months is too long for a honeymoon, is it not?" asked Miss Silverhayes, looking ruefully at Chevington. It seemed so hard to discuss wedding-tours before this melancholy widower; and he, seeing the look, felt himself in the way, and vanished impatiently, joining his sisters in the garden.

"Well, but can nothing be done? Can nothing be said to bring home to Helen what we all feel about him?" protested Mrs. Gruter.

Miss Silverhayes shook her head. It was clear she declined to meddle in the matter. Then Mrs. Gruter determined to speak. The bitter pain which gnawed at her heart for the loss of her own daughter, intensified her interest in the concerns of these

girls. Grief might have sharpened her speech, but it had not narrowed her sympathies.

Helen was sitting beneath the sun-dial, on the grass, when Mrs. Gruter approached, and beckoned her to a rustic bench beneath an apple tree in the full glory of its tinted bloom. It was the same old bench that the curate used to sit upon when he came to see the young lady of the Manor-house, half a century ago. Ciceley and Chevington were slowly sculling up and down beneath the chestnut trees, Ciceley snatching bunches of the big yellow water-ranunculus and blue forget-me-nots, as they skirted the opposite bank by the mill.

“Helen,” said the determined lady, “I am not young enough to take new winks at old situations. All that ever happens in life has happened before; so experience does count for something.”

Helen thought of the curate, and waited to hear what was coming.

“I want to speak to you to-day, to warn you, once for all, before it is too late.”

The pigeons cooed, the cuckoo sang. Helen read the motto upon the sun-dial before she answered—

“No, don’t; pray don’t, dear, kind friend. I know what you are going to say, and I assure you it is best left unsaid.”

“But I cannot leave it unsaid. If your brother cannot rouse himself for your sake, I must. Helen, we are not satisfied with Mr. Keltridge. We do not consider that he prizes you enough. It may be that he is ill; he looks a sickly, suffering being; but his temper—in short, we do not consider that he is worthy of you. I feel towards you as if you were my own child now, and I cannot think that he will make you happy. We do not think that he will make you a good husband, you know.”

Helen had risen whilst these words were being uttered; and her protesting attitude

conveyed total dissent from the elder lady's opinions. She now said eagerly, with heightening colour—

“You do not know Randal, Mrs. Gruter. He is so reserved; he has not the gift of pleasing people. I am sorry that you do not like him, but it does not surprise me. He is not able to express the best of himself; that is part of the sorrow of the lonely life he has led; it is his misfortune, not his fault. But he is very true, and very steadfast; and he cares more about me than he is able to show. Nothing would induce him to break his engagement with me, I know; and it would be equally impossible for me to fail in my promise to him. Believe me, dear Mrs. Gruter, we understand each other best, and we are satisfied. I have often heard you say that no one knows anything about husbands and wives, or ever understands their mutual relations, but themselves; and perhaps it is true already of us.”

“Oh, of course you young people always know best,” sighed Mrs. Gruter; “but, my dear, you are warned! And Professor Gruter, too—you know how little notice he takes of things in general—but even he said I was to tell you, with his love, to ‘give it all up’ and ‘come and live with us,’ like our own”—here her voice broke—“and be another daughter to us. Come, my dear, and give up this melancholy cripple, who pursues you like Fate. We don’t want a second tragedy in the family.”

“Dear Mrs. Gruter, I assure you that it cannot be. I belong to him and he belongs to me. Whatever our fate may be it is stronger than I am; stronger, perhaps, than he is either.”

“Then, at least, if the day comes that you repent, you cannot blame us.”

“Blame you! No! Nor shall I ever blame myself, or him! I will say more: if I felt that you really wanted me on

your own account, I would come, and Randal should wait; but I know that it is not so. No one can fill Margaret's place beside you in any measure, even the least. It is only for my sake, not for your own, that you ask me to come."

That night little Miss Silverhayes wrote at the end of the day's record in her diary—she had kept a diary all her life—"Fidelity to engagements is a Christian duty." She used to set it for a copy to the children in days gone by. She really knew far too little about the risks and chances of matrimonial happiness, to share in Mrs. Gruter's misgivings, and, provided with that definite axiom, she felt a comfortable sense of having gone quite to the root of the matter. Having thus summed up her judgment of the day's decisions to her own satisfaction, upon a fundamental principle, as she liked to do, she prepared to get into the old-fashioned four-post bedstead, with

chequered curtains and queer bobbined valance, which had been her mother's before her. It was early yet. The family clock was but just striking nine; but she was tired with the events of what to her had been an exciting day. She and Helen had supped together, after the rest of the party had returned to Cambridge; and now she had left the girl alone in the tapestried chamber. But at this unusual and altogether unexpected time Miss Silverhayes caught the sound of footsteps on the gravel approaching the house, and the sound of men's voices reached her from below. She was much perturbed. What could it be? They were knocking at the front door, too, and Ellen was not opening it. So, hastily replacing her night by her day cap, she opened the small leaded casement, and, leaning out, saw her nephew, Unwin Silverhayes, and Randal Keltridge standing below.

"Dear, dear!" she sighed; "so the day

is not yet over. How young men do turn night into day, to be sure ! Who would have thought of Unwin's turning up in this way, and Mr. Keltridge, too, in this unusual manner ?—Well, Unwin, I expect Ellen is afraid to come and let you in. She thinks you may be burglars ; but Miss Applewood is in the drawing-room, and the glass door is probably open still. You had better go round that way, and I will be with you directly."

Keltridge immediately disappeared round the house, availing himself of the permission ; but the doctor, who presumably did not care to interrupt the greetings of a pair of lovers, took the kitchen by storm ; and, before his aunt could descend, had joined her in her chamber.

"What has brought you, Unwin ? And why did you not let me have a line, that your room might have been ready ?" she asked anxiously.

"A little business, aunt. I could not have sent you word. I was detained till too late, in town. I should have passed the telegraph-boy upon the road. You see, you live so far out. And," he added gravely, "as it happened, it was a good thing that I did come to-night. It was, probably, the means of saving a life."

She wondered he should mention a circumstance which she fondly believed to be so common an event in his professional experience; but, as all he said and did was interesting in her eyes, she answered sympathetically, "What! here in Cambridge! Did they send for you, where they have so many clever doctors?"

"Not exactly, aunt. It was an accident; or, rather, my unexpected presence upon the spot was the means of preventing what might have been a fatal one."

He hesitated, as though doubtful how to proceed; but Miss Silverhayes stopped him.

“Pray don’t tell me anything dreadful to-night, Unwin. You know I never can bear to hear you talk professionally. And I am tired; and then, you see, I had finished my day, and had written up my diary; and if you tell me anything else that has happened down here, I shall be obliged to write it in before I go to bed; and I really do not feel equal to it—unless, indeed, you want my help in any way. Then, of course, it would be a different thing.”

Her nephew assured her that the event to which he alluded was a thing of the past, and that her interference was not necessary. “But why you should bother yourself with keeping a diary in your quiet existence is what I really cannot see,” he added; “I should be extremely sorry to perform such a task myself.”

“That is just it, Unwin; I keep a diary because so few things happen here that it

seems to make them more, to write them down."

"Well, be thankful, then, you have no more to write to-night."

"How did you and Mr. Keltridge come together—just tell me that?"

"Well, I picked him up on the road, and gave him a lift in my cab. He would not have been here, for I don't know when, if I hadn't chanced to come along. That's a sorry swain for a charming girl. Not that Miss Helen Applewood is to be compared with her sister. Still she is a pretty girl."

"Hush, Unwin, pray!" said Miss Silverhayes, in distress. "There is Ellen knocking; she will hear what you say. Go down and get some coffee. I suppose you both have dined?"

"I can only answer for myself, not for the other fellow. He looks as if he wanted a good meal. And that starveling is the sort of man that picks up all the best and nicest

girls. I've seen it happen scores of times. I haven't a chance myself beside that sour-faced fellow. It is a serious fact that the highest order of woman has a passion for martyrdom in matrimony. No such woman will throw herself away out of pity for me."

Miss Silverhayes sighed. "Unwin, you do make my head ache when you talk like that; I shall really not be able to come down again to-night."

"Pray don't, aunt, unless you feel that duty compels you to play duenna in the drawing-room. I will relieve you of the task, if you like; but you may as well give them an hour. It is only just past nine. If he doesn't go at ten sharp, I'll walk in and rout him out."

"Pray do nothing of the kind, Unwin," she entreated. "Come up again, and leave Helen Applewood and Mr. Keltridge to themselves. He will be sure not to stay

long. Come back and tell me what has brought you here to-night."

"A little matter of business, aunt, as I said; an opportunity not to be neglected, of buying out my colleague, who is old and ill, and wishes to retire. It's a question of funds. We can discuss it in the morning, when I'll tell you all. It's a splendid opportunity, and one I can't relinquish. It has been my wish for years. I've done all the work and only touched a third of the profits, and, in short, it can't go on. Give me the diary; I'll sketch the situation for you. I promise not to read your secrets. You won't? Well, good night, then." And he went singing down the stairs.

The moonlight was streaming into the room where Helen sat below. She had taken up her position on a leopard-skin rug in the window; the glass doors stood open, and the pale light fell upon her, transfiguring her with its radiance. The

expression of her soft eyes showed that she had passed into a region of reverie. For her that night the garden pathways were peopled by the missing forms of her affections. The images of her lost parents, as she had seen them in childish days, outlined the shadows of a leafy grove, made by the overhanging branches of the chestnut trees ; and the silent steps of Margaret, her beloved sister, pressed again the mossy lawn, passing by the screen of roses where she had stood, confident in beauty, life, and love. But the sound of actual footsteps on the gravel recalled her from her visionary communing with angelic souls, and Keltridge, wan, eager, haggard, as she had never seen him, even at his worst, before, confronted her. For a second she doubted the testimony of her eyes ; she was so accustomed to the unfailing regularity of his afternoon calls. But the next moment he had crossed the threshold of the window,

and she felt his arms, trembling with agitation, folding her in a grip like that of a bony spectre. She responded by gently caressing his hair with her warm hands. He, forgetting the tenderness of their half-healed state, seized them, and held them until the pressure of his grasp brought tears of pain to her eyes. Then, seeing that he had been too rough, in remorse he covered the poor hands with kisses, very unlike the cold salutation he was accustomed to bestow upon her at meeting and at parting. But his words startled her.

“Helen,” he said, “this is all a mistake! A ghastly mistake! That is what I have come to say. I am disappointed—bitterly and horribly disappointed! Oh, not in you; but in myself. You had better give me up, and let me go my own miserable way!”

Then, without waiting for her to speak, he continued rapidly—

“Yes, I am fatally disappointed in myself!

I thought that I should be able to lay aside my wretched solitary modes of life and thought. I thought I could begin a new existence with you; and that all that life seems to be to other men, it might become to me. But it is too late. I cannot do it."

He sat down from sheer exhaustion, hiding his face in his hands.

"I am like a living being shut in a frozen mass of ice. I am near you. I see you and touch you; but I am too far. I thought that, under your influence, the ice would break, and that your love would release me; that I should become one with you, and find myself a new man when you accepted me; but, strive as I may—and I have striven—I only become more and more conscious of the isolation of my lot. I am absolutely separated from you, and from every other human being; and every day my efforts to break through these barriers grow more and more hopeless! Speak to me, Helen! Say

what we had better do. I know quite well what all these people think, and what Mrs. Gruter has been saying to you to-day; she has been telling you what a poor, miserable wretch I am for a beautiful young creature like yourself; and that I am not worthy of you. It is all true, and yet it is not true in the sense she means it. I do value you, and long for you. You are my only hope; I have none in any other direction. But I know what is just. I cannot make you happy, and you had better leave me while there is time."

Whilst he ran on excitedly, Helen, summoning up all her powers of calm judgment, was considering his case with tender observation. What was best for him, in so far as she was able to decide, being the one thought uppermost in her mind. When he ceased speaking she laid a gentle hand upon his shoulder—she had learnt by experience the soothing power of her own

touch ; and her tones were measured and calm.

“ If,” she said, “ I could find in your mind the least real wish or desire that I should give you up, this should be our last interview ; but, judging by what I feel, it is not so ; your soul cleaves to me whilst your lips renounce me.”

“ It does ! It does ! ” he answered.

“ The very fact that you increasingly deplore your own isolation proves that you care the more to overcome it. You are unhappy because you have not more help to bring me ; but I should be very cruel if I did not want to help you too. Perhaps I also have been in some way to blame, since I have not helped you as much as you expected. If so, tell me, and I will alter in anything I can. Well, if it is not so, shall I tell you what I think remains ? It is that you are ill ; and, if you are physically suffering, you need me more than ever to take care of you.

We will take care of each other. You shall be hands to me, and I will be feet to you. Neither of us can scorn the other. If you were already my husband, and were ill and depressed, I should not leave you; and why should I now, unless I became aware that there was some other underlying motive in your mind that I cannot find?"

"There is absolutely none," he answered, "beyond the very definite reason I have given you. You know me as well, or as ill, as I know myself. There is indeed one thing," he said, "which I have kept from you to-night; but it is for your own sake. I will tell you that too, shortly. If you will still keep me, as I am, and will not expect more from me in the way of demonstration than I am able to give, you will never find me otherwise unworthy or ungrateful for all that you are to me and do for me."

"Then we will melt your icy prison together," she said. "We two shall do it,

never fear. You from within, I from without. We have hardly had time to begin yet, and you are despairing already. But do not let us talk of it again. You exaggerate your melancholy tendencies by dwelling upon them."

"Then it shall all go on as we intended?"

"Yes, of course," said Helen, cheerfully. "Since it is only for my sake, and not for your own, that you proposed to be rid of me. I believe when we get away you will feel better."

"I believe that I shall," he answered more hopefully; "but it is late now for the Manor-house, and I must go."

"You are not walking back, surely?"

"No, no. Dr. Silverhayes is here; did you not know it? He had a cab. He told it to wait."

He was about to ratify their new agreement by another embrace; but the door opened, and the doctor entered, with a

discreet professional air. He carried a lamp in his hand, which he flashed into Helen's eyes, and then began wandering round the room, with a notebook, as though he were an auctioneer valuing the furniture. He held the light up to examine the condition of the tapestries; he took down pieces of the valuable blue china from the three-cornered cupboard by the fireplace; he opened and examined the printing-press; and Helen thought he over-acted a desire to give her time to compose her countenance. But she was mistaken. The doctor had other and more masculine motives of interest, in the probable value of the contents of the house; he was the sole heir to the property, and it had become necessary at this crisis of his career that he should convert his expectations into hard cash. But the instant that Keltridge disappeared by the drawing-room window, Silverhayes followed him, and put him into the cab as

considerately as if it had been a lady, or a patient. Then, bending forward over the splashboard, he tapped his own breast-pocket and said—

“Let me know when the day comes; and I’ll return this little treasure to you. You ask me down, and I’ll bring my gift with me.”

Keltridge’s reply, if he made one, was lost in the starting of the hansom. Then Unwin Silverhayes returned to the drawing-room, but found that Helen Applewood had fled.

No sooner had she escaped to her own room than she sank back in an easy-chair, a prey to doubts and fears she had but brushed with the wing of thought before. Over and over again that night she searched the whole situation, in so far as she knew it, with painful scrutiny. “Was it better or worse for Randal that she should stick to him?” That was the form the question took; and, in so far as she could judge, she

saw no cause to alter her decision. It was not that he did not love her, or that he loved somebody else better ; but that his disposition was morbid. Still he was young enough to have hopes of emancipation from this thralldom ; and she was young. Moreover, she had the confidence in herself of a strong nature, conscious of latent powers. She felt it impossible to believe that the surrender of herself, with all her courage, force, and devotion, should be too poor a thing to accomplish the deliverance of one man's soul from bondage. And she gave herself to a task wherein she believed love and duty might be conjoined.





CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE he left the next morning, Unwin Silverhayes informed his aunt that he should "look them up at the time of the wedding."

"But, Unwin," said the little lady, "you have not been invited; and it is to be so very quiet."

"As this is your house, aunt, a formal invitation in my case is scarcely necessary. The fellow can't exclude your own family. It will be all right. I shall come."

Miss Silverhayes had misgivings as to his being welcome, but she could not refuse his assistance."

The remaining weeks passed without any

further allusion to doubts on any one's part, and the wedding-day dawned. It was an unusually hot and sultry morning for the middle of June.

In the little village church there were only five or six people assembled, with a sprinkling of school-children, and a handful of cottage matrons. Great indeed was the contrast between this wedding, and the one which Keltridge had avoided, two years before. When Chevington and Margaret had been married, all had been gay as a spectacle, joyous in memory and in anticipation. No presentiment of the dismal reality to follow had dimmed the sunshine of that day; the lack of cheerful auguries upon this might be as empty of signification. Chevington Applewood was not present—it was understood that he had gone up to town to be out of the way; but Professor and Mrs. Gruter were there, with Ciceley, Miss Silverhayes, and

her nephew ; and Keltridge had his best man.

This individual was the college bursar, and he was one of those friendly souls, so indispensable to society, who will, as occasion requires or their own kindly nature suggests, occupy any semi-official position ; who will witness your signature, officiate as chairman on any number of committees, accept the post of churchwarden, act as your executor and arrange your funeral, without even a reservation should you wish to be cremated.

On the present occasion this urbane personage was decidedly bothered by Dr. Silverhayes. The doctor was, as became his profession, by far the best got-up man in the company, and he took so much upon himself that all the women in the church mistook him for the bridegroom ; whilst his marked attentions to Ciceley led her, since Helen wore no distinctive dress, to be immediately identified as the bride.

The real hero and heroine of the day were, indeed, quite eclipsed by this brilliant couple. These two, having no responsibilities to sober them, plunged at once into the excitement of a flirtation, which committed neither of them to anything, and which served to dispel the weight of dismal association oppressing the rest. Dr. Silverhayes opened the windows to air the stuffy little church, placed hassocks for Ciceley and the bride, unfastened pew-doors for the older ladies, hunted up the organ-blower who was drinking over the way, and made himself quite as much at home as if he had been a curate, or a clerk, brought up in the church. All this was peculiarly trying to an irritable bridegroom, with nerves strung up to concert pitch, and a special hatred of the self-reliant breed to which Silverhayes belonged. So irate had Keltridge been the night before, when he found that the doctor was expected to

appear, that it had exhausted Helen's powers to persuade him to conceal his displeasure, at least from Miss Silverhayes.

By the time that the service was concluded, and Dr. Terence Garfoyle had got into the vestry, where he stood beaming upon them with an air at once grotesque and fatherly, Keltridge was aware of no other emotion which could compare in strength and intensity with his hatred of Unwin Silverhayes. It was not what he had expected to find in himself upon this very special occasion; it was not, he was aware, what any one else would think creditable of him; but it was stronger than he was, this maddening irritation against a man who was not nervous, was not anxious, was not lame; who, having no particular part to play, yet felt himself capable of undertaking anything, of meeting anybody, of saying or doing anything that he might choose to say or do, and finally

of making friends with any one with whom he might be brought into contact.

Keltridge was really thinking of Helen, too, all the time ; but in a subdued and postponed sort of manner. He and she were going to be all in all to each other by-and-by, when they could get out of reach of these tormenting circumstances ; when they should have escaped from this persistent man, from the presence of Professor and Mrs. Gruter, the professor carrying a bird-cage with an obtrusive canary in it, which he presented to Helen as a wedding gift ; from the sympathetic eagerness of Miss Silverhayes's attentions to the bride ; from the sisterly solicitude of Ciceley, and her tiresome attempts to show that she had quite forgiven himself. Keltridge, for ever having made an offer to her.

It cannot be averred that Helen herself felt any renewed misgivings. She had

closed the subject, after having given it her best consideration. She was not going to surround her decision with a haze of doubt, now that the time for reconsideration was past. They were to leave in the afternoon for Chester. The breakfast was over. The carriage at the door. The canary was shrieking upon the back seat, where the professor had tiresomely placed it, with a basket containing its provisions, and a huge bunch of groundsel. This diverted his mind ; but every one else was so prompted to tears by tragic memories, that the occasion of saying "good-bye" was readily seized as an excuse for such demonstrations. It was unendurable ! Keltridge, with his nervous horror of a scene, seized the opportunity to break away from the company, and found himself for an instant free, standing in the verandah alone. For such a moment Dr. Silverhayes must have been upon the watch, for, following him hastily, he thrust into his

hand a heavy object, loosely enveloped in a handkerchief.

"Here is your property, Keltridge," he said. "Here is the interesting article which has been in my possession since our drive out from college three weeks ago. From a fortunate bridegroom there can be no excuse for my longer detaining it; especially as you will find that it is not now loaded. You can safely stow it among your traps. I should reserve it for practice upon the canary if I were similarly situated! Accept my congratulations with it."

The growl wherewith Keltridge seized and concealed his restored revolver was unmistakably the medium of a curse. But the other continued imperturbably—

"I am on my way back to town; can I be of any use in securing a compartment in the train, or in telegraphing for rooms for you? You are no doubt aware that the Queen is the best inn in Chester;

but, probably, you have arranged all that already."

Now, Keltridge, with his usual self-absorption, had forgotten all about securing rooms at all; and this remark struck consternation and self-reproach into his breast. Not for worlds, however, would he have given the other man what he felt to be an advantage over him by owning as much; and, after receiving an absolutely curt refusal, the doctor flung himself into the hansom that awaited him, and Keltridge took his place beside his bride. But, at the station, the ubiquitous doctor turned up again. He was waiting for the London train. Keltridge saw him, and hurried Helen into a second-class carriage, half full of people, having first carefully consigned the canary and its impedimenta to the chances of the first-class waiting-room.

There was nothing in Helen's dainty dress to distinguish her from any other

young lady attired for a journey; and they might have escaped special notice could Keltridge have got in after her as quickly as any ordinary man would have done, but his lameness prevented his accomplishing this feat before Dr. Silverhayes was upon him, proffering an empty first-class compartment, with the concurrence of the guard; and a few seconds afterwards that official returned, bearing in triumph the discarded canary, and extending an expectant palm.

“How could the crazy fellow stuff his dainty bride in there, with a lot of commonplace holiday-makers?”

Keltridge read the words in the doctor's face, and was rendered more determined than ever.

“Why couldn't the doctor mind his own business, and take his hated person away!”

He answered savagely that they were “going to remain where they were;” and

he would not see the guard with the canary!

Pained by the impression which she saw he was creating, Helen hastened to explain that she "preferred her present position."

But not even yet were they free, for the doctor, who seemed to regard all exhibitions of temper as he might have done an attack of gout in a patient, as a salutary effort of Nature to relieve herself, lingered till the last moment over his friendly adieu to Helen. At length he was forced to rush for his own train, and the bride and bridegroom were left to their own devices, though not to their own company.

This might have been satisfactory enough, but for the fact that the doctor's words and manner had deprived them of the advantages which Keltridge had sought. Everybody in the compartment had ascertained their mutual relations, and they were stared at unmercifully throughout the rest

of their journey. So many pair of eyes paralyzed them at last, so that they felt unable to speak to each other.

Helen proposed to change carriages at Crewe, but Keltridge, who always disliked getting in and out because of his lameness, did not receive the proposition favourably. So they stayed where they were, and counted the time to the end of their journey.

When they reached Chester, Keltridge felt it necessary to confess to Helen that he had neglected to secure rooms; but, to his relief, she treated the matter very lightly, saying that, in a big town like that, there was sure to be plenty of accommodation: nor did she seem at all inclined to blame him for what he now regarded as culpable neglect upon his own part. The doctor had said the Queen was the best inn: but Keltridge felt that not for worlds would he take that man's advice, even in

details; so he got a list of the principal hotels at the station—where there seemed to be an unusual bustle—and they drove off, only to find that every place was full. The assizes were going on, which, of course, they had not known; there was also an agricultural show, and a meeting of cathedral choirs; it was the fullest day in the whole year in the ordinarily dull country town, and all the rooms had been engaged for several weeks beforehand.

This result of his own want of foresight annoyed Keltridge horribly. It ended in having to snatch a meal at the station restaurant, and to take the last train, a slow one, for Caernarvon. The unusual heat had been the presage of a tremendous thunderstorm. As they travelled onward through the night the claps of thunder came crashing through the air; several trees beside the line were struck by lightning as they passed; the darkness

was illuminated by streams of lambent lightning; then the rain, which had been falling in heavy drops through the sultry air, increased to a perfect deluge. They sat speechless, clinging to each other in their dual solitude. He, overwrought and utterly unnerved; she, half in fear, half awe, at the marvellous splendour of the scene. But Helen noticed that Randal trembled and shivered violently, as the tempest raged around them; whilst her steadier nerves enabled her almost to support him. She was sure he was quivering with sheer fright and nervous exhaustion, in spite of his irritable denial of fear; and, when they reached Caernarvon in the early morning hours, he was so prostrated that he relinquished everything to her guidance, as though he had been a child.

Dr. Silverhayes appeared to have an unusual amount of business, even for so prosperous a physician, awaiting him on

his return to town after the wedding ; his dining-room was full of visitors ; his brougham was driven rapidly from the offices of various men of business, to the houses of his West-end patients. Not a quiescent moment did he enjoy all day, nor did his employments permit him many hours' sleep ; yet, at eight o'clock the next morning he was seated, well dressed, and capable as ever, at his solitary breakfast. Even at that hour his door-bell began to ring. He rose to insist upon being denied until nine ; but, on recognizing Chevington Applewood's voice, with more of its old ring in it than had been heard for many months, he changed his tone, and welcomed him in, pulling a chair up to the table, and setting food before him with hospitable alacrity.

“ Sit down, Applewood ; help yourself, and hear the news of the wedding, for which, I take it, you've come.”

"You'll have to dissect my pie for me, then, Silverhayes. I have come at this unwarrantably early hour," said Applewood, quite cheerfully, "with the characteristic selfishness of the race, not for gossip, but for your professional assistance. I'll take a cup of coffee and tell you my tale. The fact is, I've met with a slight accident, sprained my shoulder—disagreeable, but not dangerous, you know; and I'll get you to see it if you can spare five seconds before the countesses begin to arrive. I don't suppose it amounts to much; but it gives me acute pain if I try to use the arm at all."

At this appeal the doctor, who had at first been too intent on getting through with his own breakfast to do more than note the renewed animation in the tones of Applewood's voice, cast a glance of professional interest at his visitor.

"Why, my dear fellow, what the blazes

have you been doing with yourself? Let us hear more about this accident. You've surely been in a fray. Have you been fighting the police in a good cause? Don't say, for the credit of the college, that you've joined the Salvation Army, or the Labour League. Have you been drugging the pain of an accident, or treating it with stimulants? Turn to the light. No! Pupils normal. Pulse slightly accelerated; but only what your evident state of exhilaration warrants. You've invoked the aid of the barber, I see, before you claimed mine."

"In the good old days," said Chevington, smiling, "the barber would have been all-sufficient for my needs, and you would have been saved any bother in the business."

"You were rash to trust yourself in the hands of such a one as must have shorn your hyacinthine locks, Applewood. I should say he was the snip attached to

Holloway Jail, by the style of tonsure he has inflicted on you. A threepenny shave and shampoo, severe enough to last a twelve-month, that's the sort of thing. But come, now, I'm at your service; and, as yet, you have not informed me how you came to grief."

"Well, the fact is, Silverhayes," said Applewood, drawing himself up with the old manner, "I was returning from my club to my hotel on foot last night, in the very worst of the storm we had; I couldn't pick up a cab at once; and at the back of the Strand, in a street running down to the river, there was a house struck by lightning, which set it on fire. I was mixed up with the crowd somehow, and I found myself, before the engines arrived, in the very front of the fray. Naturally, as an old sailor, I went up some ladders, and did what I could; but the firemen were soon on the spot, and further aid was superfluous. Indeed, by

that time I was pretty considerably smothered with smoke. I fancy I fell from a considerable height—at any rate, I must have been unconscious for a while; but when I came round I found that the police had considerably turned the hose on me with a notion of reviving me. I was singed and scorched, and drenched, and dizzy, and then I discovered that I couldn't work my arm; and the police procured me a cab and took me back to my quarters. It has taken me the rest of the night to pull myself together, and make myself presentable."

"And with it all," said the doctor, "you are a new man. You look as I have not seen you look for months. The excitement has been positively most beneficial; it has lifted you out of your depression. You've had a shock of some sort, and it has roused you to good purpose. Your appearance exactly tallies with the description given by a man I know, a surgeon in the ambulance

corps during the French and German war, of the men that were brought into the hospital tents with wounds of which they were still unconscious save by ocular demonstration, so drunk were they with the excitement of battle."

"Well, in some measure you may be right, Silverhayes; but the fact is, I prefer to discuss the matter only under its pathological aspect."

"Oh, as for that," said the doctor, "the matter is simple enough; merely a sprain of the deltoid muscle, with probably some fracture of fibres. Don't be uneasy; it may be painful—sympathetic rheumatism or neuralgia may be partly the occasion of that; there will be local discolouration presently, but it is not in any way serious. You must keep your arm in a sling for a couple of weeks, after which time you'll forget all about it. On the whole, you are to be congratulated."

Applewood seemed distinctly disinclined to gratify the doctor's curiosity further.

"I scarcely thought," he said, "that I should be fortunate enough to find you here so early. I chanced it ; but I imagined that this was your senior partner's place, and that you had diggings of your own elsewhere ?"

"And you were right," said the other ; "but the big boss has departed, begging me to buy him out. It gives me a terrible lot to do, what with the transfer of the practice, house, furniture, and everything ; but its progress is in the right direction for me."

"I congratulate you in return," said Applewood ; "there must be a solid satisfaction in success achieved mainly by your own exertions."

"Fortune comes easier by inheritance or marriage," observed the doctor, sententiously.

"Well, the latter, at any rate, is still in your own power ; but pray, how did my

sister's affair go off yesterday? I feel now, very strongly, that I ought to have been there."

"I recommend that sofa, Applewood. You must rest the shoulder. What is your morning choice in smoke—pipe or cigar? Remember you are my patient."

"I'll do anything you are pleased to suggest, Silverhayes, except swallow drugs; that is a habit I have never acquired."

"Should I venture to prescribe bromide of potassium to a man drunk with elixir vitae? You are intoxicated with your exertions; very possibly you may even have been successful in saving the perfectly worthless life of some absolutely valueless creature. But your heroism has been its own reward; you've rescued your own life from the curse of melancholia."

Applewood looked annoyed.

"You must make your own diagnosis, Silverhayes, without any further assistance

from me," he said, resolutely dismissing the subject. "But, once more, I shall be really obliged if you will give me some information about my sister's wedding, at which, as I have said, I own to feeling I ought to have been present."

Silverhayes gave a brief account of the uneventful function, and both men smoked in silence for some minutes; Applewood reproaching himself for previous inertia, Silverhayes preparing a communication he had to make.

"He is a strange being, that new brother-in-law of yours, Applewood," the doctor presently said. "How he does detest me! Not that that is any evidence of eccentricity."

"It is a fact which may be held significant of healthy vitality, if attributable to a rational motive," said Applewood, smiling apologetically.

"The origin of the sentiment was undoubtedly morbid," replied Silverhayes;

“but it ripened into intelligent activity under the influence of a fact, which it may be as well I should communicate to you, as Mrs. Keltridge’s brother. One evening, about three weeks ago, I was driving out to my aunt’s house, having run down for a night on business, when I unexpectedly came upon Keltridge, leaning over a gate with his back to the road, in a state which I at first took to be intoxication ; but, on going up to him, I found him to be merely in a condition of extreme agitation. You know the sharp turns in the road, and how narrow the lane—for it is nothing more—is ; I was upon him clearly before he had even heard anything coming—anyway, he was utterly unnerved. And there was a further circumstance which I should have mentioned to you before, but I felt that you yourself were not then in a condition to have the subject forced upon you.”

“I have said I ought to have paid more

attention to my sister's concerns," said Chevington. "I regret my abstraction extremely ; but it is ended now. What further have you to divulge ? Speak plainly."

"He had a revolver in his hand ; it was loaded, as I afterwards found, in six chambers, and he appeared to me seriously like a man who was contemplating self-destruction, when interrupted by my appearance. He tried to dodge behind a hedge ; but I was too quick for him. He had evidently just been loading it ; but his hands were shaking so, it was a marvel he had accomplished it. He would probably have failed in his object anyway. I doubt his courage."

"Ah," said Chevington, gravely, "I know the temptation ! I've been near enough to it myself these last twelve months ; but, in his case, what could have been the motive ?"

"Who knows ?" said the doctor. "The suggestions of a wretched physique, probably.

He might not have done himself any immediate mischief, perhaps ; but he certainly was not in a fit state to be trusted with the means of doing so. I removed the temptation out of his way. When he saw that he was discovered, he tried to escape ; but I made him get into the cab, and drove him out to the Manor-house, where your sister was staying. I asked him no questions, and made no comments at the time on what I had seen ; but I left him to make a clean breast of it to her, if he had anything rational to say, which I doubt."

"And the thing?"

"I restored it to him in a harmless condition after the ceremony yesterday."

Applewood looked excessively disturbed.

"I cannot help wishing," he said, "that you had made an opportunity of mentioning the circumstance to me before ; but I am aware that I myself am to blame for having been unobservant."

“There need never be a recurrence of the danger under altered conditions of life. Now that your sister has his happiness in her keeping, no doubt he will leave all those demons behind, robbed of their power over him,” said the doctor. “Can you tell me, has he ever broken down within your knowledge before?”

“He broke down in college between two and three years ago, after the death of a young lady cousin, to whom he was supposed to have been attached; you were not up at the time, or you’d remember it.”

“Well, his marriage offers the best hope for his cure; but I could have wished your sister a better mate.”

“Do you consider his conduct amounted to insanity?” asked Applewood, with some hesitation.

“My dear fellow, who knows what insanity means? Roughly speaking, nothing will prove a man insane until he has committed

murder or suicide; anything will do to convict him afterwards. No, no! Keltridge is not what's commonly meant by 'mad;' but he is melancholy, morbid, morose, without sufficient warranty in facts such as, pardon me, you had, to excuse him."

Applewood rose to depart.

"You must show that shoulder to some one in Cambridge, if you're going back there to-day," said the doctor.

"I must return this morning," said Applewood; "but I shall be in town again directly. In fact, I am thinking of giving up my house at Newnham immediately, and of settling in London."

"Why not take up your abode here, then, and go shares with me in the house?" asked the doctor. "Haven't I told you I'm the man in possession? And it's inconveniently large for me."

"Thanks, I'll consider it," said the other,

as he took his leave. "Anyway, I'll look you up again in a day or two, and let you know my decision."

The first place that Chevington Applewood visited when he got back to Cambridge was the Manor-house. The first person he sought was Miss Silverhayes. She was alone now that Helen had left her. The instant that she looked at him she saw that he had returned a new man. His voice was again resonant. His eyes were even fuller of light than before. He surprised her by exciting a new feeling of admiration, even of awe, in her mind. Under the immediate sway of his influence she was unable to guess what change had fallen upon him; she had eyes only for his vivid presence.

Taking a newspaper from his pocket, he showed her a brief account of the fire in which he had distinguished himself. The reporter spoke in the usual terms of the

heroic conduct of the volunteer who rendered such important assistance in rescuing the terrified inmates from the fire.

At first she scarcely understood that it was the man himself who stood before her ; then, seeing his changed aspect, and noticing his arm in a sling, she began to comprehend the story.

“ But I have not shown you this,” he added, for the sake of dwelling upon the external aspect of the affair ; “ if that were all, it might remain a sufficiently unimportant event, save to the personal sufferers. But I have more to tell you, which I have reserved for your hearing alone. No one else would give credence to my story. To your ears only do I dare to confide it. Listen, and pray believe that, indeed, whilst I fully recognize what accusations I lay myself open to of being mad, or deceived, I yet deliberately assert the truth of my story, so far as the evidence

of my own senses is concerned. What others saw I cannot say ; I can only assert that, when I was swept by the rush of people to the foot of the burning building, I looked up—all the faces around me were upturned—and there, in the midst of the flames, by the instantaneous illumination of the lightning, I veritably beheld Margaret, my wife. In as sublime and wonderful a manner as it was possible for me to behold her, I saw her once again. Not, indeed, as I had beheld her the moment after her departure, beautified by the soft glow of a translucent light, the face luminous, as it were, from within, but far more humanly. The beseeching entreaty in her eyes, the outstretched appeal of her attitude, were but invitations to me to ascend to her. I lost all sense of peril, all knowledge of danger, in the enterprise. Margaret was bending over me, drawing me upwards by the cords of love, beckoning me to come to her. She

was surrounded by flames, and how often had my imagination conjured up that environment ! Where she appeared, at first it was bright from the glare of the fire, and I approached the spot where she seemed to stand in safety, and without, as it seemed to me, much difficulty ; but when I had all but reached the goal, I found myself in utter darkness ; and it was in the thickest blackness of smoke that I fell suffocated. When I came to myself, I had been carried away. But it was Margaret who drew me upwards by the vision of her glorified self, or possibly her spirit, which had continued power so to impress my imagination, just as she first impressed it at the moment after her death. Once more her face shone with the light of an undying love, and her lips moved in tones familiar only to my ears."

Miss Silverhayes listened silently, with earnest attention, to the glowing record, then she said sympathetically—

“It is not difficult to me to believe that some direct and inward sight was permitted you, because you had no opportunity of gaining sufficient assurance from any intellectual source ; but I should be grieved to think that you interpreted the actual facts literally. Although accounted for by the association of ideas, and by the heightening effects of a disturbed imagination, yet I do not doubt it was a spiritual thing, spiritually seen. I would not call it a delusion, but a vision.”

“Certainly,” answered Chevington ; “we all live too much in the atmosphere of modern thought here, not to be well aware of the contempt and scorn with which such a confession, as that I have now made to you, would be received, alike by orthodox believers and by scientific sceptics. I am not at all deluded as to the judgment passed by many upon my state of mind since I lost my wife. I am well aware that I should

be immediately told that I was particularly liable to mistake the action of an overwrought or diseased imagination for an actual representation; that I was predisposed from intense absorption in one idea, suggested by the tragic circumstances of my bereavement, to invest an accidental occurrence with extreme significance, and to hail it as a supernormal sign. All that I am well aware of, I may well be told that the whole thing was purely subjective; if so, I answer, 'In it I have received a token which transcends argument; but, inasmuch as it was undoubtedly meant for me alone and for none other, to none other should I ever offer it as proof.'"

"No one would seek to deprive you of it who has ever felt a like need," she answered gently.

"When I find my sorrow diminished," he replied, "by being told that it is purely personal, I consent to allow my comfort to

be ravished by the assurance that it is absolutely subjective. When the sorrow is universally felt, the demand that the consolation should be based upon grounds wide enough to make it common property may be fairly made; then, and not till then. I have sometimes heard the claim to entertain any form of consolation, which is not immediately attainable by the whole human race, denounced upon ethical grounds; to this I reply, 'My assurance is indeed potentially attainable; but only by those to whom the sufferings which have procured it for me are equally known. Suffer with me, if you would see with me.' Such has been the response of the seer in all ages, I suppose."

"I should estimate the value of your vision more by the permanent effects it may have upon your future, than by its present influence upon your mind," said Miss Silverhayes, gently.

“You forestall what I had further to say. I am going to leave Cambridge at once. I have learnt, by the impress of Margaret’s spirit upon my own, that she would not have me linger on in inaction in the house that has been to me her tomb. I can scarcely tell you of my further plans at present; but I must have a far more stirring life; one of enterprise, not of thought; one that will employ my physical energies. I cannot go on with university work from year to year. I shall give up my house at once, and get Mrs. Gruter to take care of Ciceley. Your nephew suggested to me last night that I should take up my abode with him in town. It seems the arrangement would be a convenience to him; and I incline to think it would suit me as well as any other for the moment, but I incline to think that I shall return to a life at sea. It was my earliest choice, and it has attractions for me which no other state can now

offer. But I must be going. I've heaps of things to see to."

"Take care of your wounded arm."

"Oh, I'll take care of it! I am like Jacob, you know. If one goes among the angels, one's mortal body shrinks at their touch; but one's soul chants its glorias."

"Now ought I to have told him," thought Miss Silverhayes, sitting alone, and in much perplexity, after Chevington's departure, "that the whole thing was clearly the product of his distressed and excited imagination seizing upon the first likely surroundings? I believe that Mrs. Gruter would have felt that to be her duty, and she is a far wiser woman than I am; and yet, surely there is nothing alien to the consideration in the persuasion of us 'friends,' that, as every soul has its own heaven and its own hell, so every soul may have its own individual gift of insight, its own special revelation? The question is, what is to come of it? Is such a splendid

nature to be restored or marred by it? For the moment it has certainly roused him from his lethargy, and has made him again what he was before the change came upon him. It is a pity, as he turns to me, that I am only an old woman, and that I never was a clever one."

So she determined to wait and see, and to judge of the event by the results that were to follow.

END OF VOL. I.

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